SYAMA SASTRI

AND OTHER

FAMOUS FIGURES OF SOUTH INDIAN MUSIC

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PREFACE.

A short book giving biographical and critical accounts of the great composers and musicians of South India has been a long-felt desideratum. This book is intended to supply that want. I gathered materials for this work in the course of my tours in the Southern Districts during the years 1927, 1932 and 1933. As no detailed account of Syama Sàstri has so far appeared, I have dealt with him at length in this book. My grateful thanks are due to Messrs. Natesa Sastri and Syama Sastri, both great-grandsons of the distinguished composer of Tanjore, for having given me full details regarding him and his ancestors and descendants.

In the preparation of this work, I derived valuable help from the *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini* of Subbarama Dikshitar, *Gayaka Siddhanjanam* of Tachur Singaracharlu, *Karunamirtha Sagaram* of Abraham Pandithar and the

illuminating articles on Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, contributed to the *Kalai Magal* by Mahamahopadhyaya Dr. V. Swaminatha Iyer and several other works.

Lastly, I must express my grateful thanks to the Rev. H. A. Popley for his kindness in having gone through the proofs.

26th Nov. 1934 THE AUTHOR.

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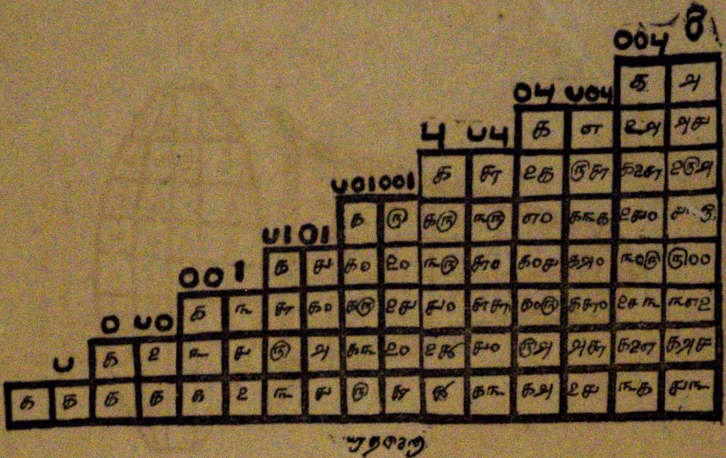
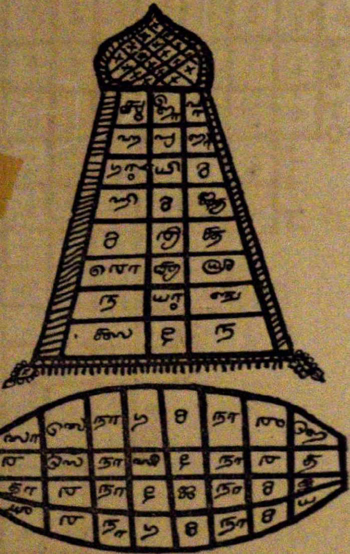
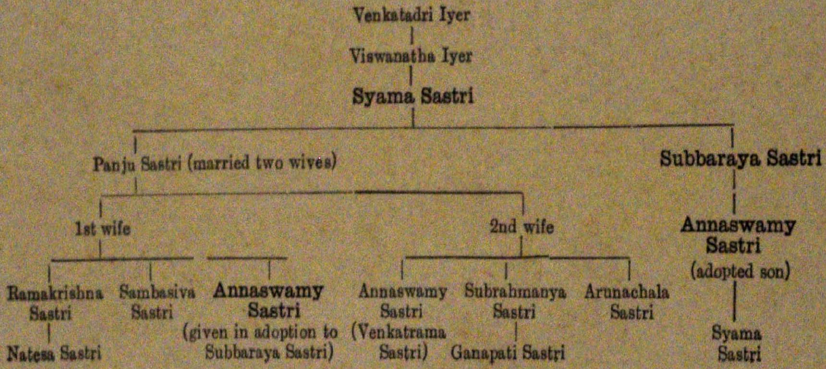


Tala Prastara: Plate I.
(From Syama Sastri's own MSS)



Tala Prastara: Plate II.
(From Syama Sastri's own MSS)

GENEALOGICAL TABLE.



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The period 1750-1850 seems to have been a remarkable period in the history of music all the world over. The greatest musical geniuses of the world lived and flourished during that period. Europe saw at that time the great composers Beethoven, Mozart, Mendelssohn, Chopin, Schubert and Weber. The Musical Trinity of South India lived and flourished during that period. It seemed as if God in His bounteous mercy resolved upon sending His musical apostles to the earth during that period to deliver the message of music.

The three great composers, Tyagaraja (1759-1847) Muttuswamy Dikshitar (1775-1835) and Syama Sastri (1763-1827) are by common consent called the Musical Trinity of South India. They are sometimes also called 'Sangita Trimurtis' and 'Sangita Mummanigal' (மும்மணிகள்). They were born musicians and were kings in their own realm. They had the composer's technique in them. Their kritis are raga crystals and for the polished nature of their music and the beauty of their language, their compositions

will for ever remain unsurpassed. The presentation of ragas in their modern setting, the uncommon facility with which they wrote in apurva ragas, the individual quality of the different kritis in the same raga, the abundance of feeling running through their pieces, the sublime and soul-stirring nature of their music, all these and more have entitled them to be ranked as the Musical Trinity.

There are also other interesting points about them. They were men of rare scholarship, proficient in Sanskrit and Telugu and well versed in the Vedas, Sastras, and other sacred lore. They were adepts in the Jyotisha Sastra and Mantra Sastra. They were contemporaries and lived in the Tanjore District. They were all born in Tiruvarur; and according to a Tamil saying: (கமலையில் பிறக்க முக்தி) salvation was assured to those who were born in Tiruvarur. Divinely appointed musical gurus came to initiate them in the higher branches of the musical art. In the case of Tyagaraja it was the Sage Narada himself who came in the guise of a sanyasi and presented him with the rare work '*swararnava*'. There is internal evidence in his kritis to show that this incident did take place, but unfortunately the work alluded to above, is lost. There are various explanations: that this work was destroyed by fire; that

it lies buried somewhere in Tiruvayar and so on. The musical preceptors of Muttuswamy Dikshitar and Syama Sastri were Chidambaranatha Yogi and Sangita Swamy. All the three composers were great devotees who spoke to God and to whom God spoke. They exhibit distinctive styles in their kritis and developed that musical form to perfection. It is difficult to improve upon the music of their pieces. The raga swarupa is patent on the face of every one of them. They were prolific composers. Tyagaraja composed more than 2000 pieces, while the two others are credited with 300 pieces each. They were also great moralists and philosophers, who had tasted the sweet nectar of *nija sangita* (true music) and enjoyed the pleasures thereof. Lastly each shook off the mortal coil punctually on the day and hour predicted.

CHAPTER II

MIGRATION OF FAMILY

Of the three great composers, no authentic biography of Syama Sastri exists. Excepting for some cursory accounts contained in the *Gayaka Siddhanjanam* (Part II) of Tachur Singaracharlu, *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini* of Subbarama Dikshitar and the *Karunamirtha Sagaram* of Abraham Panditar, no systematic attempts seem to have been made to write the biography of the great composer that shone on the musical firmament of South India towards the latter half of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century.

Syama Sastri came of the community known amongst the Tamil-speaking Brahmins of Southern India as the Vada-desattu Vadamal (வடதேசத்து வடமாள்). His ancestors originally lived in Cumbum in Kurnool District, and were therefore called Cumbattar (கம்பத்தார்). They later migrated to Conjeevaram in Chingleput District. They were not archakas (temple priests) by profession. The story of how they came to be appointed archakas is interesting.

Tradition has it that Brahma once performed a penance at Conjeevaram and at the conclusion

of the same saw the *Jyotis* (divine light) of Devi, which almost blindfolded him. To commemorate the great event, He Himself prepared a swarna vigraha (golden-image) of the Goddess and installed the same in a temple.* After the consecration ceremonies, He offered puja to the Deity. The idol was then called

BANGARU KAMAKSHI

on account of the large proportion of gold in the alloy of the metal. This is the idol that is now kept in the Kamakshiamman Temple in Tanjore. It is recorded that Sage Durvasa amongst other Maharishis performed puja to the Deity. When Adi Sankaracharyar visited Kanchi, the temple was in a dilapidated condition. He renovated the same and ordered that henceforth there shall be Smartha Vaidika puja to the Deity. The Jagadguru chose the ancestors of Syama Sastri for the purpose as they were well-known for their piety and sound learning.

MIGRATION

For some centuries every thing went on well. But after the fall of the kingdom of Vijaya-

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*It will be interesting to note in this connection, that Conjeevaram is one of the few places in South India, having a temple for Brahma.

nagar in 1565 A.D. troublous times arose. The archakas thought it advisable to leave Kanchi with their *Bangaru Kamakshi* and go and settle down in a place in the south, far removed from the scene of trouble and disorder. They considered amongst themselves and in the year 1566 A.D. (the Tamil year Akshaya) the archakas with their families left Kanchi in a body. They carried with them the *Chaturbhuja Utsava Vigraham** also along with *Bangaru Kamakshi.* Their subsequent history is full of adventure. As they had enough property with them they were above want. The temple jewels and other valuable riches were concealed within the udal (உடல்) the templedrum. Wandering through several forests for a period of 28 years they came to

GINGEE

in 1594. Gingee was ruled at that time by the benign sovereign Santana Maharajah. The religious-minded ruler made several valuable presents including many silver vessels to the Deity. These silver vessels are even now to be seen in the Tanjore Sri Kamakshi Amman Temple, bearing the donor's name in Devanagiri characters. After a stay of 15 years at the Gingee

*In the place of this Vigraha, a new one was made later and consecrated and this is the one now in the Kanchi Temple.

fortress, the archakas travelled southwards. At the forest adjoining

UDAYARPALAYAM

they stayed for 15 years.

The Zamindar of Udayarpalayam invited the party to come and stay in the town and promised to build a temple for the Deity. The archakas responded to the invitation and in the year 1624 came and settled down in Udayarpalayam. They were treated hospitably by the Zamindar and all facilities were given to them.

Although the number of families at the commencement of the migration from Kanchi was only ten, the number since that time had considerably increased. The right of puja by custom belonged to the eldest male in the eldest male line. Barring this single right the members of the several families enjoyed equal rights and privileges.

For a long period of 70 years everything went on well. But as misfortune would have it, the Zamindar began to give preferential treatment to the members of the family that had the puja right and bestowed special favours upon them. For sometime the members of the other families put up with this insult. But soon matters grew worse and the members of the aggrieved families deter-

mined to get away from the jurisdiction of the Zamindar of Udayarpalayam.

In Mr. Swaminatha Pillay, the Mirasdar of Anakkudy (near Kumbakonam) they found a very sympathetic friend. This gentleman was of a pious nature and was highly respected by all, high and low. The Raja of Tanjore presented him with a *Golden Plough* and since that time Mr. Swaminatha Pillay came to be popularly known as the (தங்க கலப்பை உழுத ஜமீன்தார்) Zamindar who ploughed with a golden-plough. The grievances of the archakas moved him. He said unto them "If you will manage somehow to get *Sri Bangaru Kamakshi* within my estate I will afford you all shelter and facilities and also screen you from any consequent troubles from the Zamindar of Udayarpalayam." The archakas were overwhelmed with joy at this assurance of protection and help.

They counselled together and in the year 1694 on the appointed night, the members of the aggrieved families with *Bangaru Kamakshi* left Udayarpalayam in a body. At about 4 a.m., the Zamindar dreamt that the Deity had left his jurisdiction. He woke up and found that the dream was only too true. Although overcome with grief, he mustered presence of mind and immediately sent his men on horseback to overtake the

archakas and persuade them to return, assuring them of greater honours and privileges. It was however too late. Before the horsemen could get at the party of discontents, they had crossed the Udayarpalayam border and had gone over to the other side. The horsemen hesitated to proceed further, as before them were ranged Mr. Swaminatha Pillay's armed men ready for action in the event of any trouble. The disappointed men retreated and narrated to their Chief their unsuccessful expedition. The Zamindar wept bitterly and repented of his folly. He beseeched the members of the *favoured family* to settle down permanently in his Zamindari and gave them free gifts of several velis of land and property. The members of this family reluctantly acceded to the request of the Zamindar. The descendants of this family are even now to be seen in Udayarpalayam. The Kamakshi Amman Mantapam (the place where the Deity was kept) facing south can even now be seen in that Zamindari.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY.

The Anakkudy Zamindar informed the Mahratta Ruler of Tanjore about the arrival of the Kanchi archakas. The Raja was immensely pleased and sent a message of welcome to them assuring them of Royal support. The archakas

were however indifferent to the royal favours for their ultimate object was to get back to their original place in Conjeevaram and settle down there permanently if possible. After staying in *Anakkudy* for a period of 15 years, they went to *Vijayapuram*, where they spent another fifteen years. From Vijayapuram they passed through *Nagore*, *Madapuram* and *Sikkil*, staying in each place for a period of five years. They finally came to *Tiruvarur* where they stayed for a long period of 45 years. The Deity was kept in a special mantapam in Sri Tyagarajaswami Devasthanam. It was at Tiruvarur that our hero Syama Sastri was born.

About the year 1781 when there was the fear of an impending invasion and devastation of the whole place by Hyder Ali and his men, our hero's father Visvanatha Iyer to whom the right of puja belonged at that time, interviewed Raja Tulajaji (1765-1787), the then ruler of Tanjore and obtained his consent to come and stay with his family within the walls of the Tanjore fortress, where there was greater protection and security. Accordingly in the Tamil year Sarvari (1781) he came to Tanjore with his family. In the Konkaniswara Swami Kovil in Tanjore, the Deity was kept for five years. About the same time several other idols from different shrines in-

cluding that of Sri Tyagarajaswamy Devasthanam of Tiruvarur were brought and secured in this temple. Many vigrahas from Vaishnavite temples were secured in the Rajagopalaswamy Temple in Tanjore. But after the death of Hyder Ali, these idols were removed back to their original places. From the Nataraja Mantapam of Konkaniswara Swamy Temple, *Bangaru Kamakshi* was taken and kept for three years at the Moolai Hanumar Kovil. Soon a new temple was built and the swarna vigraha was brought and installed there. On the occasion of the Kumbhabhishekam ceremonies the Raja gave Syama Sastri's father large free-hold estates, including an agraharam and cultivable lands and endowed the temple with 32 velis sarvamanyam. This temple which is now almost 150 years old is the one at Tanjore called Sri Kamakshi Amman Temple and the present archaka Mr. Natesa Sastri by name is the great grand-son of Syama Sastri.

CHAPTER III

EARLY LIFE AND INITIATION INTO MUSIC

Syama Sastri was born at Tiruvarur (also called Srinagar) in the Tanjore District in the year 1763, corresponding to the Tamil year Chitrabhanu, in the Mesha ravi and Krittika Nakshatra. He came of the Gautama gotra and belonged to the Bodhayana Sutra. His father was Visvanatha Iyer and his paternal grandfather Venkatadri Iyer. At the time of his birth, his father was 25 and his mother 20 years of age. The circumstances attending our hero's birth are interesting.

In another street in Tiruvarur, there lived a devout Brahmin who performed Sri Venkatachalapati Swami Samaradhana on the last Saturday of each month. On one of those occasions one of the invited Brahmins in a moment of Divine Inspiration called the grahastha (house-holder) and commanded him to fetch Visvanatha Iyer's wife. The pious woman soon came and the Inspired Brahmin said :—

> " Next year in the month of Chitra, in the Krittika Nakshatra on a Saturday a son will be born to you. Arrange for a samaradhana for hundred persons."

The woman humbly replied :—

"We have not enough........................"

"If not for a hundred, at least for twentyfive" retorted the inspired devotee and forthwith the inspiration vanished.

(This incident is related by Subbarama Dikshitar in the *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini* in a slightly different form. But Mr. Syama Sastri the great grand-son of the subjcct of this sketch gave me the version given here.)

Our hero's mother returned home joyously. According to the divine ordaining, she conceived and after a period of ten months on the day predicted was delivered of a male child. As the child was born in the Krittika Nakshatra, the sarmam of Venkatasubrahmanya was given. Out of affection however the child was called 'Syama Krishna.' The boy was brought up with parental care and affection. The mother and the father intuitively knew that their son was destined to become great but they did not and could not guess that he was to make his name in the field of *music*. When he came of age he was given a sound education in Sanskrit and Telugu. He learnt the rudiments of music from his maternal uncle, who was not a great musician. When he reached 18 years of

age he came over to Tanjore along with his parents.

Syama's ancestors were not musicians ; nor did they encourage the study and practice of music in their families. So much so, that when our hero mastered the rudiments of music from his maternal uncle in a very short time, nobody took any notice of it. No one dreamt that this young lad of eighteen was destined to give to the world those immortal kriti compositions in a style peculiarly his own. Although he was gifted with a very sweet and melodious voice, still the idea of giving a good musical training to him never occurred to his parents. But Nature plans her own methods for the training of her chosen ones.

Even as the divine Minstrel *Narada* came in the guise of a sanyasi and initiated Tyagaraja into the mysteries of music by presenting him with the work known as *swararnava*, even as a sage in the person of *Chidambaranatha Yogi* came to Muttuswamy Dikshitar to initiate him into the secrets of *Nija Sangita* (true music) so also a sanyasi in the person of *Sangita Swamy* came to Syama Sastri, to initiate him into the hitherto unknown mysteries of Tala and Raga. Sangita Swamy was an adept in the art of Music and Bharata Sastra. He used to perform

nartana (dance) before Sri Visveswara at Benares every day. This Swami was an Andhra Brahmin and in the course of his pilgrimage to the south, came to Tanjore. As the Chaturmasya period just then commenced he was obliged to stay in Tanjore and spend the period of four months there.

At the invitation of our hero's father one day the Swamiji had his *biksha* there. The *biksha* over, the father introduced his son to the distinguished guest. The Swamiji at a moment's glance noticed that the young person had rare musical talents. He immediately predicted the future greatness of Syama. The father thanked the Swamiji for his kindness in responding to his invitation and requested him to bless his son.

From that day onwards, *Sangita Swami* bestowed special attention on the musical training of Syama and led him to the hitherto unknown mysteries of the raga and tala prastara kramas. Having acquired real scholarship in the Telugu and Sanskrit languages under the able tutelage of his father and possessing a massive intellect and a rare capacity to grasp even the most subtle and difficult branches of the science of music, Syama was just the pupil to receive instruction in the higher branches of the art from the great guru *Sangita*

Swamy. He made amazing progress and soon mastered all the intricacies of the raga, tala and swara prastaras. The guru in great joy presented him with some rare musical granthas (works) which contained a mine of information on the mysteries of the gandharva vidya.

Towards the close of the chaturmasya period the master said unto his pupil :—

> "My dear Syama! you have learnt enough of the sangita sastra (theory of music). Now it is time you listen to a lot of *good* music. Particularly I would suggest that you cultivate the friendship of *Pachimiriam Adiyappayya, the Asthana Vidwan of Tanjore Samasthanam, and then listen to his scholarly music as often as possible. But take care that you don't learn anything from him."

So saying Sangita Swamy blessed his pupil and went back to Benares.

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* Pachimiriam Adiyappayya the immortal composer of the famous "Viribeni Varna" in the Bhairavi Raga, though a great musician and a composer, it seems was not a good teacher of music. "கேழ்வைமட்டும் இருக்கட்டும். - அவரிடத்தில் ஒன்றும் கற்றுக்கொள்ளவேண்டாம்" was the Swamiji's advice to Syama Sastri.

According to his guru's advice Syama Sastri made the acquaintance of Adiyappayya, who in his time was adored as the king of musicians. They soon became very good friends. In course of time Adiyappayya came to have a reverential regard for his pupil. He used to call him affectionately 'Kamakshi' Whenever our hero went to the Asthana vidwan, the latter's disciples used to take leave and disperse, for they knew the great regard which their guru had for Syama Sastri and the pleasure he derived from conversing with him. Adiyappayya was over fifty when his young disciple was just over eighteen. An incident is recorded which will testify to the reverential regard which the Asthana vidwan had for his young sishya.

Syama Sastri had an undue fondness for chewing betel leaves. That is why he is represented in an oil painting as holding folded betel leaves in his hand. One day in the course of a conversation, a portion of the betel leaves' juice slipped from his mouth and fell on the clothes of his guru. Apologising immediately for the negligence on his part, he hastened to fetch water to remove the stain from his guru's clothes. Adiyappayya prevented him and said " My dear Syama! This is Sri Kamakshi's Anugraham (blessing). I was only waiting for this from a long time. Now

only I am initiated into the mysteries of *nija sangita* (true music)." And so saying he prevented him from even touching his stained cloth.

CHAPTER IV

HIS CAREER

At the time of the commencement of his career, Syama Sastri was well placed in life, his father having received large gifts of land from the Mahratta Rajah of Tanjore. He was thus above want, unlike his two illustrious contemporaries. After his father, the duty of performing puja to *Bangaru Kamakshi* devolved upon him.

Syama Sastri soon acquired a great name and fame as an expert musician and composer. His scholarly musical compositions, consisting mostly of kritis and swarajatis, brought on him the warmest encomiums even from the most uncompromising critics of his time. In the skill in manipulating the most intricate time-measures he had no equal. He was able to handle the apurva ragas with as much ease as the more common ones.

He was an intensely pious person and his devotion to Sri Kamakshi was thoroughly

genuine. He was a person who spoke to the Goddess and to whom the Goddess spoke. Sri Kamakshi was to him a real living Person (*pratyaksham*) and She gave him ***darshan*** more than once and blessed him. Truly Syama Sastri was a *Mahapurusha*. On Fridays and other sacred days he would sit down in prayer and in the height of devotion, tears used to roll down his eyes. During those inspired moments, when he lost all consciousness of mundane existence, he sang many of those sweet, melodious songs, which for their originality, richness of musical conception and abundance of feeling will for ever remain the admiration of music scholars. I was told by his descendants now living in Tanjore, that it was Syama Sastri who gave "*Sri Vidya Upadesam*" (*i.e.*, initiation into the cult of Devi Bhakti) to his illustrious contemporary Muttuswamy Dikshitar.

Syama Sastry had a majestic appearance and a commanding personality. He had a beautiful complexion and always wore a pure white, slightly lace-bordered cloth. The saffron mark on his fore-head, his *Rudraksha-mala* mounted in gold round his neck, his diamond ear-rings, his bright-coloured shawl, his silver-mounted walking-stick, his beautiful slippers all contributed to his impressive personality. Nobody who saw him

even once forgot him. As he passed along the streets, the people seated on the pials of the houses on both sides got up and paid respects to him and the people who went in front made way for him to pass through. "Truly he is the king of musicians" everyone exclaimed. Such was the great reverence and regard which one and all had for him.

Unlike his two illustrious contemporaries, he had few disciples and even to those few he did not care to teach all his compositions with the same zeal, interest and enthusiasm. Had he only done so, we should at the present day be in possession of the music of all the three hundred musical compositions he is said to have composed. He was content to lead a peaceful life and was scarcely afflicted by the turmoils of the outside world. Placed in good circumstances he was not obliged to make a living through music. He disdained royal favours and would never stoop to ***narastuti*** —praise of mortal men. Tyagaraja and he were goods friends and occasionally he used to go to Tyagaraja's house in Tiruvayar. As soon as the latter's disciples saw Syama Sastri, they murmured amongst themselves, "Oh! to-day we will have our meal only at 2 P.M.; these two composers will go on talking, talking, talking.......".

At those occasional meetings, the two great personages used to compare their new pieces and profited by mutual criticism. He did not go on extensive pilgrimage tours like his contemporaries, but spent most of his time in Tanjore.

Once, he was invited by a friend of his, to go to Pudukottai. While there, an unknown person came to him and requested him to go to Sri Minakshi Sannidhanam at Madura and sing a few kritis in Her praise. He thought it was a command from the above and forthwith started for Madura along with him. On his way he composed nine kritis in praise of Sri Minakshi Amman and called them '*the Navaratna-malika*' the garland of nine gems. At Madura, he was received with temple honours. He sang the *Navaratna-malika* before the Goddess and received Her blessings. The famous song in the Sankarabharana raga beginning with the words "*Saroja dala netri*" is one of these nine gems.

CHAPTER V

HIS CONTRIBUTION

Of the Musical Trinity, perhaps the compositions of Syama Sastri are least well known and least distributed. This is due to two causes: Firstly, his compositions are of a scholarly nature and are in intricate time-measures. It was possible only for persons who had attained a high degree of proficiency in music to master them and sing them correctly. It was always considered a rare accomplishment in a musician to be able to sing or play a few of Sastri's compositions correctly. Sastri's kritis have been the admiration of musical pundits for a long time. It is for one thing difficult for the masses and those unlettered in music to be able to enjoy and appreciate his compositions. It is the privilege only of those initiated in music to be able to feel, understand and truly enjoy the superb excellence of his kritis. Most of them like Tyagaraja's were composed by him during his moments of inspiration and hence abound with feeling. His compositions in apurva ragas like Manji, Kalagada and Chintamani stand as monumental proofs of his rare genius and originality in discovering new forms in fields which to others were apparently barren.

Secondly, Syama Sastri did not have many disciples around him to learn his compositions with devotion and zeal. In the days when printing facilities did not exist the one method by which a composer made himself known was by gathering a number of disciples around him and teaching his compositions to them. These people afterwards went and sang them before the public and thus gave publicity to them. Therefore the compositions of those who had a larger number of disciples had greater chances of publicity. This accounts to some extent for the wide popularity and distribution of Tyagaraja's kritis. Tyagaraja had more than fifteen devoted disciples who learnt the pieces from their master with reverential regard and who afterwards taught them to several others in their respective districts. The great bard of Tiruvayar also drew his disciples from distant places and this accounts for the distribution of his songs over a large area. Muttuswamy Dikshitar's compositions too attained publicity only through his two brothers, his descendants and his disciples.

Syama Sastri is a scholarly composer in every sense of the term. His compositions are not of the class that immediately catch the imagination of the laymen. They have got to be studied over

and over again before their intrinsic merits could be appreciated. He was indeed a creative artist to a high degree and has given us a distinct style of kriti composition. His style is neither so simple and homely as Tyagaraja's nor so difficult and laborious as Muttuswamy Dikshitar's. He has composed in both Sanskrit and Telugu and the raga svaroopa is patent on the face of every one of his compositions. For the beauty of the language employed by him and for the polished nature of his music, he can he compared only to Tyagaraja. A sterling Devi bhakta that he was, he chose as the theme for his pieces, the praise of Devi. He delighted in introducing in many pieces, the *atita-anagata* complexities. He composed in intricate time-measures and signed his pieces with the *ankitam* (signature) "Syama Krishna." He is said to have composed about three hundred pieces consisting mostly of kritis, a few swara-jatis, varnas and ragamalikas. Besides these, he has left us valuable *mss.* wherein he has worked out with great patience and care and in full detail the different prastaras in the tala system.

Once, a few disciples of Syama Sastri who had exaggerated notions of their own musical talents went before Tyagaraja and sang some of their guru's kritis. They failed to sing them

correctly and in one or two places committed grievous blunders. Tyagaraja got so annoyed that he forthwith asked them to stop and remarked: "You have miserably failed to grasp the rhythmical construction of his pieces. You are actually murdering them and you are sinning against the great composer.........". It was this incident that occasioned the composition of the kriti "*Vara raga layagnulu*" in Chenchukambhoji raga.

Syama Sastri seems to have had a special liking for the Anandabhairavi raga. He has composed more pieces in that raga than any other modern composer. To a true artist, minor ragas afford as much scope for creative expression as the major ones and this fact will be amply borne out by a close study of his Anandabhairavi pieces. He took a special delight in composing kritis and swarajatis in the chapu tala.

From the point of view of *rasabhava* Tyagaraja's compositions might be compared to the *draksha* (grapes), Muttuswamy Dikshitar's to the *nalikera* (cocoanut), whose pulp can be eaten only after the shell is broken and Syama Sastri's to the *kadali* (plantain fruit), to eat which we have only to peel off the thin skin.

The following are some of the wellknown compositions of Syama Sastri:

Kritis:

Beginning words		*Raga*	*Tala*
Ninne namminanu	...	Todi	Chapu
Kanakasaila	...	Punnagavarali	Adi
Brova samayamu	...	„	„
Parvati ninnu	...	Kalagada	Roopaka
Triloka mata	...	Paraj	Chapu
Sankari samkuru	...	Saveri	Tisra laghu
Durusuga krupa	...	„	Adi
Nannu brovu	...	Lalita	Chapu
Brovavamma	...	Manji	„
O Jagadamba	...	Anandabhairavi	Adi
Himachala Tanaya	...	„	Chapu
Pahi Sri Girirajasute	...	„	Roopaka
Mari vere gati	...	„	Chapu
Palinchu Kamakshi	...	Madhyamavati	Adi
Saroja dala netri	...	Sankarabharanam	„
Ninnu vinaga mari	...	Purvakalyani	Misralaghu
Devi brova samayamide		Chintamani	Adi
Talli ninnu nera	...	Kalyani	Chapu
Birana varalichi	...	„	Roopaka

Swarajatis:

Rave Himagiri	...	Todi	Adi
Kamakshi Anudinamu	...	Bhairavi	Chapu
Kamakshi ni	...	Yadukulakambhoji	„

Tana Varna

Samini rammanave	...	Anandabhairavi	Ata

CHAPTER VI

ANECDOTES

Several interesting anecdotes about Syama Sastri have been handed down.

During the reign of Sarabhoji, there came to Tanjore a musician from Bobbili called Kesavayya. He was so puffed up with his musical talents that he arrogated to himself the title of 'Bhooloka Chapa Chutti' (பூலோக சாப சுட்டி—భూలోక చాప చుట్టి)—the man who rolled the world into a mat. Thirsting for fame, he travelled towards the south. On his way he went to several samasthanams and challenged the vidwans there. Invariably he won in all the musical contests and compelled the vanquished musicians to surrender their tamburas and all the costly presents they had received from their patrons—the Rajahs and Zamindars. Encouraged by these successes he desired to go to Tanjore also and challenge the vidwans there. The Tanjore samasthanam in those days had the reputation of having in it some of the best exponents of the art. Kesavayya's ambition was to gain a victory even over the Tanjore vidwans and return back victorious to

Bobbili with laurel wreaths and secure for himself undying fame and renown.

In course of time he came to Tanjore and one day went to the samasthanam and boldly challenged the vidwans there.

To save the reputation of Tanjore, the palace vidwans were obliged to accept the challenge from the Bobbili musician. True, there were many illustrious musicians in the samasthanam, who could easily have vanquished ten Kesavayyas, but they got unnerved at hearing the story of his continued successes in the several samasthanams. His pompous attitude, his preposterous title, his majestic tambura bedecked with flag, the sight of the cartloads of tamburas and other costly presents surrendered by the several defeated musicians, accompanying him, all these and more made them despair of success. They counselled amongst themselves and at last resolved that the only person who could successfully deal a blow to the Andhra musician and save the honour of Tanjore was Syama Sastri.

A day was soon fixed for the contest and on the day prior to this, the palace vidwans went in a body to Syama Sastri's house and acquainted him with the situation. Syama Sastri, like his contemporary Tyagaraja, disdained royal patronage

and rarely visited the palace. Even on rare occasions when he was in need of money, he got the help willingly offered by two rich friends of his, at Tiruvadamarudur and at Pudukottai. The only consideration that prevailed upon Syama Sastri to accede to the request of the vidwans was that he might thereby save the reputation of Tanjore.

The news that the great Syama Sastri had consented to meet Kesavayya in the musical contest on the following day spread like wild fire. Musicians and lay people gathered in thousands the next day to witness the great historic contest. The Maharajah was hopeful that the reputation of Tanjore would be saved by Syama Sastri.

After the palace vidwans left, Syama Sastri sat alone and pondered deeply over the matter. He too felt a bit unnerved at the thought that he had accepted the challenge. The highly coloured accounts that the palace musicians gave of Kesavayya and his musical prowess was not without its effect even on his mind. After the evening prayers, he went and shut himself up in the temple and prayed devoutly that he might be successful in the next day's ordeal. He sang on that occasion the famous kriti in Chintamani raga, Adi tala " *Devi brova*

samaya mide". No other composer seems to have attempted a song in this raga. The music of this kriti by itself reveals the perturbed state of his mind at that time. The Goddess was pleased with Her bhakta's prayers and forthwith he saw some good signs indicative of his morrow's success. He returned home with great joy.

Next day he left his home for the palace. He had the kunkumam (saffron-mark) on his forehead as usual. As he entered the palace, the eager crowd lustily cheered him. Syama Sastri took his seat opposite the Bobbili vidwan and soon there was a profound silence in the whole assembly. Everyone held his breath and eagerly awaited to see what was going to happen. The Maharajah had ready before him all the costly presents on a silver tray to be given to the person emerging victorious.

The signal for the commencement having been given, Kesavayya forthwith tuned his tambura and started singing a raga. He followed it up with tana. He exhibited wonderful creative skill by singing tanas in different jatis and gatis. The Bobbili musician was at his best in this branch of creative music and with the zealous idea of winning an immediate victory, he tried all the intricate types that he had

learnt and practised for years. When he stopped, Syama Sastri asked him coolly "Is this all or anything more ?" This proved a bomb-shell to the Bhooloka Chapa Chutti, for he thought his opponent would immediately prostrate before him and acknowledge his defeat. When it came to the turn of our hero to sing, he not only sang similar tanas without the least effort but displayed greater original scholarship in presenting newer aspects of this branch of creative music, left altogether untouched by his opponent. After exhausting the possibilities in this direction, he directed his attention to the other sub-varieties, of whose very existence Kesavayya was ignorant. For he was aware of only the *manava* variety of tanas and specialised only in that.

Every one in the audience saw that while the music of Kesavayya was somewhat stereotyped, that of Syama Sastri was characterised by richness of musical conception and creative art of a high order. Kesavayya was easily humbled. He rose and took leave and went out. The world did not hear anything more of the Bobbili musician after that time. The joy of the spectators knew no bounds. Numerous were the honours and encomiums showered upon Syama Sastri by the Maharajah, for he had saved the honour of Tanjore

at a critical moment. The palace vidwans in a body expressed their heartfelt thanks to Syama Sastri.*

* * *

Appukutti, a †nattuvan of Negapatam was very proud of his musical attainments and deliberately put to disgrace every vidwan that he came across. When Syama Sastri went to Negapatam on some private business, the local musicians surrounded him and besought him to redress their longstanding grievance. A conference was soon arranged in the Nilayatakshi Amman temple and it was agreed beforehand that if Appukutti got defeated he was to give up his tambura and tala and retire from the profession; in the event of Syama Sastri's defeat he was to become a sanyasi forthwith. The nattuvan was no match for our hero and he was easily routed in a simple pallavi. Forthwith Appukutti left Negapatam for Mysore where he received royal patronage. The nattuvan, gentleman that he was, spoke to the Maharajah about the rare talents of the great Syama Sastri. At the Maharajah's request, he

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* I am giving this anecdote as narrated to me by the late Vidwan Manathattai Doraiswamy Iyer who got it from his uncle, Vidwan Manathattai Ramaswamy Iyer.

† Nattuvans are the hereditary class of teachers of the art of dancing in S. India.

went to Tanjore to request our hero to come to Mysore.

Laying at the feet of Syama Sastri all the costly medals and khillats he had received from the Maharajah, he said unto him :—

"The Maharajah of Mysore has heard of your greatness and is very anxious to see you. He is desirous of honouring you with *kanakabhishekam. So please come."

To this Sastri replied, "My dear man, the royal favours and honours are no lure for me. Further my end is approaching. So I cannot possibly come". The nattuvan reluctantly withdrew and returned back to Mysore to tell the Maharajah about the failure of his attempt. This

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* Kanakabhishekam is a special honour that is bestowed upon distinguished men of letters and music in India. The honour consists in seating the vidwan on a golden plate and pouring on his head the contents of a vessel full of gold coins. When the ceremony is over, the plate, the vessel and its contents become the honoured person's property. Arunagirinathar, the immortal author of the *Tiruppugazh* hymns was honoured like this by the Manali Mudaliyar of his time. Later Arunachala Kavirayar, the author of the Ramayana Kirtanas was honoured with kanakabhishekam by Manali Muttukrishna Mudaliar. Muttuswamy Dikshitar also was honoured like this by Vaidyalinga Mudaliar, the learned Mirasidar of Kulikarai, a village to the south-west of Tiruvarur.

incident took place in 1826, six months prior to his demise.

* * *

While young, one day Syama's father left him in charge of the temple and went out on some business. At that time a devotee came to perform archana to Sri Kamakshi. Young Syama Sastri recited the mantras distinctly in a melodious manner and in ragas appropriate to the time. The devotee was so pleased, that he went out forthwith, purchased a costly shawl and presented the same to him. Syama Sastri thanked the devotee for his generosity. He then went to his maternal uncle (his first music guru) wearing the new shawl and prostrated before him for blessings, as is usually the custom on such occasions. That gentleman, instead of rejoicing over the incident grew jealous of his nephew's talents and tore his (nephew's) music note-books into pieces and threw them away. Tears began to roll down the eyes of Syama Sastri, for he was hardly prepared for this insult. Leaving his uncle's presence, he came to his father, who had returned by this time, and narrated all that took place. The father instead of consoling the son, said: "My dear Syama, why do you want music? It is un-Brahmanical to learn music. It is your duty and dharma to specialise only in sacred lore." Syama Sastri

without muttering a word retreated in silence. But he intuitively knew that he had a genius for music and was destined to attain name and fame as a great composer.

* * *

Syama Sastri was an adept in the Jyotisha Sastra (astrology). His two illustrious contemporaries, Tyagaraja and Muttuswami Dikshitar also were masters of this science. His predictions always turned out to be correct. He sometimes merely looked at the face of a person and predicted his future. One day as he was sitting on the pial of his house, conversing with a few friends, a certain person passed along the street. Something struck Syama Sastri and he immediately called the way-farer and said: "My dear man, I am sorry to tell you that you have only eight days more to live—so prepare yourself." The man went away sadly. He passed away on the eighth day as predicted.

* * *

A friend of Syama Sastri once went to one of the astrologers attached to the Tanjore Samasthanam and giving his horoscope, requested him to tell his future. The astrologer threw at him a bombshell by saying that his end was drawing near. Forthwith he came weeping to Syama Sastri. The latter just glanced at his

horoscope and smilingly replied: "Do not feel worried, my dear friend. You will live for ten more years" This turned out to be true.

* * *

Syama Sastri was reputed to possess both *anugraha* and *nigraha* powers *i.e*, powers to bless and curse a person—a power that was possessed by the Maharishis in ancient times. It is well-known that his contemporaries, Tyagaraja and Muttuswamy Dikshitar, also possessed these powers.

One evening he was passing through Manojiappa Street in Tanjore in the company of his friend *Annakutty Iyer. As they passed an explosives shop opposite the Droupati amman temple, the young shop-keeper was heard to caustically remark, "There goes the Kamakshi amman temple archaka.........." When Syama Sastri's attention was drawn to this, he said: † "Perhaps his end is drawing near—that is why he is remarking in that strain." Nobody took any notice of Sastri's words. But lo! within half an hour there was a

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*He was a namam (நாமம்) wearing Brahacharanam Brahmin.

†"சாம்பலாகிற காலம் வந்தால் அவன் அப்படி சொல்லு வான்" were the actual words uttered by him on that occasion.

terrible explosion within the shop resulting in the utter destruction of everything and nothing remained of the young shop-keeper except his ashes. When Syama Sastri returned the same way after an hour, the pitiable scene of the destroyed shop and the horrible fate of the young shop-keeper moved him very much.

CHAPTER VII

HIS LAST DAYS

Like many great men it was also his fortune to possess a devoted wife. She truly felt proud of her husband's greatness and adored him. As is often the case with such virtuous wives, she predeceased him by five days. On the day following her demise, friends, relatives, admirers and disciples of Syama Sastri poured into his house to offer him their condolences on his sad bereavement. To all of them he was euphemistically remarking "Saga anjunal சாக அஞ்சுனாள் ; setta arunal செத்த ஆறுநாள்." By this he meant that there were only five days more for him to live in this world (தான்) சாக அஞ்சு (ஐந்து) நாள் ; that he would shake off his mortal coil on the sixth day of her demise

(அவள்)செத்த ஆறு (ஆறும்) நாள். Vhe visitors however construed the first sentence to mean "She feared death—(அவள்) சாக அஞ்சினுள்" and did not understand the significance of the second remark.

On the sixth day after the demise of his wife (the day predicted by him) he shook off his mortal coil. He was fully conscious till his last moments. Thus passed away the immortal composer of Tanjore in his 64th year in the year 1827, on the Sukla Dasami day of the Makara masa of the Vyaya samvatsara, according to the Tamil era. It is also recorded that his sister performed *sati*, perhaps the last to do so.

CHAPTER VIII

HIS DESCENDANTS

Syama Sastri had two sons:—Panju Sastri and Subbaraya Sastri.

Panju Sastri became the temple archaka after his father's demise and carried on the duties well. He married two wives. By the first wife he had three sons named, Ramakrishna Sastri, Sambasiva Sastri and Annaswamy Sastri. Rama-

krishna Sastri's eldest son is now living in Tanjore and is the present archaka of the temple. His name is Natesa Sastri, and he is an interesting personality with charming manners. Though past middle age he still thrills and inspires the visitors by telling them interesting anecdotes of his great grandfather. He also sings his kritis well. He is a pious man and is truly worthy of the great line of temple archakas, whose history we are able to trace since the days of Adi Sankaracharya. Mr. Natesa Sastri is in possession of several valuable and rare manuscripts on the theory and practice of Karnatic music written by the great Syama Sastri himself. Particularly the paper roll manuscripts on tala prastara containing several diagrams and showing the prastaras of the ***shodasangas*** are of permanent value.

His second son, Sambasiva Sastri was a great scholar, vedanti and brahmagnani. Children were born to him but they did not survive.

The third son Annaswamy Sastri was given in adoption to his father's brother Subbaraya Sastri.

By his second wife also, Panju Sastri had three sons. Of these, the eldest Annaswamy Sastri died without issue. The second, Subramanya Sastri left an only son Ganapati Sastri

who is now living in Tanjore. The third son, Arunachala Sastri died without issue.

SUBBARAYA SASTRI (1803—1862)

Syama Sastri's second son Subbaraya Sastri proved a worthy son of his father. He was born in the year 1803 (in the Dundubhi samvatsara, Simha masa, Krittika nakshatra). He attained great scholarship in Tamil, Sanskrit, Telugu and Music. He had the good fortune to be trained in music first under his father and then under the great composer of Tiruvayar-*Tyagaraja*. He also came under the influence of the Mahratta musicians of the Tanjore samasthanam. He composed a number of kritis and swarajatis and signed his pieces with the ankitam "Kumara." His musical compositions are replete with raga bhava and abound in beautiful *sangatis* (variations) and graceful technical appendages like the *madhyamakala sahitya, swara sahitya and chitta swara*. His kritis in apurva ragas are monumental proofs of his rare genius for original musical composition. He was also an expert violinist. He gave publicity to his musical compositions at the Sri Minakshi amman Temple, Madura. He frequently met Tyagaraja and sang to him his newly composed pieces. Tyagaraja appreciated them and congratulated the young

composer. Like his father, he also composed kritis in praise of Devi. He passed away in the year 1862 (on the Krishna Dasami Day of the Chapa masa of the Durmati samvatsara) in Udayarpalayam, to which place he had been to see his relatives.

He was intensely religious-minded and on the morning of his demise, he felt conscious of his approaching end. As he performed his sandhya vandanam, he said "*dattam*" and poured the water he had in his hand on the floor. He then said that he would survive for only two hours more. This utterance of his, reached the ears of the people quickly and many gathered to witness the closing moments of this great man. Amongst others, the Zamindar of Udayarpalayam, who had a deep attachment for his family came to Subbaraya Sastri at 8 A.M. and sitting by his bedside entreated the great composer to tell him if he had any desires to be fulfilled. Subbaraya Sastri replied "I have nothing to ask. There is the Ambal's (Goddess) anugraham what more have I to desire in this world?" And a few minutes later he passed away.

After the demise of Subbaraya Sastri, the Zamindar of Udayarpalayam, helped his family by giving Annaswamy Sastri a sum of Rs. 700 to

meet the expenses of his marriage. A good girl of eight years belonging to the Srivatsa Gotra was found for him and Annaswamy Sastri got married when he was thirty-three years of age.

The following are some of the better known and widely sung kritis of Subbaraya Sastri :

Beginning words		*Raga*	*Tala*
Nannu brochutaku	...	Todi	Adi
Sri Kamalamba na	...	Desya Todi	Roopaka
Janani ninnu vina	...	Ritigaula	Chapu
Vanaja sana	...	Sri raga	Roopaka
Meena nayana	...	Darbar	Adi
Emani ne ni mahima	...	Mukhari	„
Ninnu sevinchina	...	Yadukulakambhoji	Chapu
Sankari ni vani	...	Begada	Roopaka
Ninnu vina gati	...	Kalyani	Adi
Venkata saila	...	Hamir kalyani	„

Most of these kritis contain beautiful swara sahityas, which considerably enhance the technical and musical excellence of the pieces. Subbaraya Sastri is without doubt the most successful composer of swara sahityas.

He had a number of brilliant disciples amongst whom may be mentioned :—

1. His adopted son, Annaswamy Sastri.
2. His son-in-law Kanchi Kachi Sastri.
3. Chandragiri Rangacharlu.
4. Sobhanadri.

5. Ponnuswami.
6. Tirugnana Mudaliar.
7. Chimata Raghavalu Chetti and
8. Violinist Balu.

Kachi Sastri was a good songster and a violinist and was highly reputed for his tala gnanam. Chandragiri Rangacharlu attained great proficiency in playing the violin in the *jaru* (ஜாரு) style, which was just then coming into vogue. The *pidi* (பிடி) vadyam style of playing which was till then in vogue was gradually giving way to the new style. He was familiarly known as Fiddle Rangacharlu. He trained his two cousins Thachur Singaracharlu and Chinna Singaracharlu in music. The latter also had additional training from Annaswamy Sastri. Sobhanadri wrote a few samanya gitas and a few lakshana gitas. When he finished the dhatu (music) of the Arabhi raga Adi tala varna "*sarasija mukhi*," Subbaraya Sastri, who heard it was so struck with its beauty, that he immediately wrote the matu (sahitya) for that varna.

ANNASWAMY SASTRI (1827—1900)

Subbaraya Sastri had no sons. As already mentioned, he adopted his elder brother's (Panju Sastri's) first wife's third son—Annaswamy Sastri, who was born in the year 1827 in the Aslesha nakshatra of the Mina masa of the Vyaya Sam-

vatsara. On account of his birth within the first anniversary of Syama Sastri's demise, he was given his grand-father's name, Syama Krishna. He was however familiarly called 'Anna' by every-one. Under the able tutelage of his father he soon attained proficiency in Kavya, Nataka, Alankara, Vyakarna and Music. He practised the violin and became an expert violinist within a few years. He began to compose tana varnas and kritis from his youth. His daru (ద రు) in Kedara-gaula raga, Roopaka tala '*Kaminchiyunnadira*' and his Sahana raga kriti '*Inkevaru*' are two of his well known compositions. The swara sahityas for the kritis: "*Palinchu Kamakshi Pavani*" in Madhyamavati raga and "*Pahi Sri Giriraja sute*" in Anandabhairavi raga are his own contributions. His autograph manuscripts on the 72 Melakarta scheme and raga lakshana are with the members of his family. Annaswamy Sastri and Vina Kuppier were good friends. They frequent-ly met and took pleasure in singing kalpana swaras for intricate pallavis. Melakara Govindan (the tutor of Sarabha Sastri) and Tanjore Kama-kshi, the guru of Veena Dhanammal, were two of his disciples.

Annaswamy Sastri passed away in the year 1900 (in his 73rd year) on the Krishna Tritiya Day of the Kumbha masa of the Vikari Samvat-

sara, leaving a son named Syama Sastri, who is at present living in Madras. This gentleman is a good musician and a violinist and is a worthy member of the Great Line. He is also a painter of a high order—a rare accomplishment in a musician.

CHAPTER IX
HIS DISCIPLES

The principal disciples of Syama Sastri were:—

1. His son, Subbaraya Sastri,
2. Porambur Krishnayya,
3. Alasur Krishnayya,
4. Sangita Swamy,
5. Dasari.

Alasur Krishnayya was for sometime the Samasthana Vidwan at Mysore and attained a great name as an expert in handling intricate pallavis. He had a son, Subbaraya Sastri by name, who also became a great musician.

Sangita Swami, was a yati and a brilliant musician. The swara sahitya to the kriti "*O Jagadamba*" in Ananda bhairavai raga is his own contribution.

Dasari (padi yinti vallu-పదియింటి వాళ్లు) was an expert nagaswaram player. An interesting

anecdote is narrated of him. Once, on the occasion of an important festival in the Tiruvayar temple, he was engaged to play the nagaswaram. As the temple procession entered the main street he made a delightful alapana of Suddha saveri raga and followed it up with the kriti "*Darini Telusukonti*" He rendered the several sangatis of the pallavi in such an excellent and artistic manner that the thousands of people who were listening to the music became spell bound. Tyagaraja, who was listening to the music from his house which was close by, got so enraptured that he went near Dasari and embraced him, congratulating him on his splendid performance. The piper who was taken unawares began to tremble. But the apostle of absolute music applauded him on his beautiful performance and wished him a bright career.

CHAPTER X

HIS CONTEMPORARIES

Tyagaraja (1759 - 1847) the poet, saint, singer and composer of Tiruvayar, came of a noble pedigree and was born at Tiruvarur. He was a Muriginadu Trilinga Vaidiki, Telugu Brahmin, and belonged to the Bharadwaja Gotra. The

Muriginadu community is noted for many other famous names in South Indian musical history, *viz.*, Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbier, Pallavi Seshayyar etc. His ancestors originally lived in the Telugu Districts but later migrated to the south. His father was Rama Brahmam and his mother Santhamma. His father's father was Giriraja Kavi to whom he casually alludes to in his kriti "*Girirajasuta*" in Bangala raga. From Tiruvarur, Tyagaraja's father came to Tiruvayar in order to give his son a good education in Sanskrit and sacred lore. The son made amazing progress in his studies. He was put under Sonti Venkataramanayya for his musical education. The Guru very soon saw that his disciple was a remarkably gifted musical prodigy and began to bestow special attention upon him.

Tyagaraja lost his father early in life and on the family partition, received some property and the family idol, which he worshipped with great devotion. He took to the time-honoured profession of *Uncha-Vritthi* and led a pure and simple life, devoting his whole time to the composition of kirtanas in praise of his Ishta devata—Sri Rama. He performed 96 crores of Sri Rama Nama and obtained His darshan and blessings. He was a vainika and was endowed with a good voice.

Tradition has it, that the sage Narada appeared to him once in the guise of a sanyasi and presented him with the work "*Swararnava*" which initiated him into the mysteries of higher music. There are references to this incident in his kritis. He was a prolific composer and has composed about 2400 pieces in all. Besides kritis and kirtanas in praise of several deities, he has also composed pieces on secular themes. His *Divya-nama kirtanas* and *Utsava sampradaya kirtanas*' clothed in simple, sweet, melodious music, are sung throughout Southern India. Besides, he has produced two operatic works: *Prahlada Bhakti Vijayam* and *Nowka Charitram*. During the course of his pilgrimage he visited many shrines in Southern India and composed kirtanas in praise of the several deities.

Tyagaraja's songs are so noble, so sublime and so soul-stirring that they have rightly become classics. He was the first to introduce sangatis (variations) systematically in his kritis and showed how a composition could be enriched by their introduction. He emphasised the value of absolute music. He has made us familiar with many apurva ragas by composing pieces in such ragas. His several kritis in one and the same raga speak volumes for his wonderful capacity

and for the richness of his musical conception.

His wife, Parvati by name, was a great devotee. She pre-deceased her husband.

Tyagaraja passed away in Tiruvayar (கயிலையில் இறக்க முத்தி) at the ripe old age of 88 on the Pushya Bahula Panchami day of the Parabhava year of the Tamil Era corresponding to 6th January, 1847.

A few days prior to his demise, he took to *sanyasam*, and hence it is, that he is referred to as Tyagaraja *Swami*. His Aradhana Mahotsavam (Anniversary Festival) is celebrated with great eclat by musicians and devotees of the great Saint, every year in Tiruvayar and in all important towns and villages in South India.

It is generally believed that the Sage Valmiki re-incarnated himself as Tyagaraja in order to sing the great epic Ramayana in a new form—the kirtana. In Tyagaraja's kirtanas we are told certain incidents in the lives of Rama and Sita which are not found in the Valmiki, Kamba, and Adhyatma Ramayanas and this lends support to the above belief. It is also said that the sage of Tiruvayar completed the Ramayana in 24,000 kirtanas even as Valmiki completed this work in 24,000 slokas.

Prominent amongst Tyagaraja's disciples are :

Vina Kuppayyar
Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbayyar
Walajabad Venkataramana Bhagavatar
Aiya Bhagavatar
Umayalpuram Krishna Bhagavatar and
Sundara Bhagavatar (brothers)
Govinda Sivan and Sabhapati Iyer (sons of Madhyarjunam
Doraiswamy Iyer)
Tillasthanam Rama Iyengar
Neykkarappatti Subbayyar (father of Pallavi Seshayyar)
Ganesayya Garu
Tanjore Rama Rao
Sojiri Sitaramayya
Lalgudi Ramayya
Nemam Subrahmanyayyar
Nangavaram Nilakantayyar
Subbarama Bhagavatar
Amirtalingam Pillay.

Muttuswamy Dikshitar (1775-1835) the youngest of the Musical Trinity came of a line of distinguished musicians. Amongst his musical ancestors were the immortal Venkatamakhi and the great Govinda Dikshitar, the Prime Minister of Achutappa Naik and Raghunath Naik of Tanjore. His father was Ramaswamy Dikshitar, the creator of the Hamsadhvani raga.

Muttuswamy Dikshitar, the fourth luminary in the Dikshitar school, was born at Tiruvarur and was

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given a sound education. Early in life he became proficient in Kavya, Nataka, Alankara and other branches of knowledge. After his marriage he went to Manali, where lived at that time the great patron of arts and learning—Chinnayya Mudaliar. Many great musicians have been honoured by Manali Chinnayya Mudaliar. It was there that Dikshitar met Chidambaranatha Yogi and accompanied him to Benares. He stayed in Benares for a period of five years and became thoroughly proficient in the sacred lore as well as in the higher branches of the musical art. Incidentally he learnt some Hindusthani music also. Taking leave of his guru he returned to the South and after visiting Manali went to Tiruttani. There, God Subrahmanya appeared before him one day as a Maha Purusha. He asked him to open his mouth and threw a sugar-candy piece into it and disappeared. From that moment Dikshitar began to compose kritis and chose appropriately the signature "*Guru Guha*". He then visited Conjeevaram and came to Tiruvarur, his birth place.

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He sang kritis in praise of all the deities without exception. His *Navagraha kritis* in the seven principal talas, sung in praise of the planets, his *Navavarana kritis* in praise of Devi, his *Pancha-linga sthala kritis* in praise of the five Lingas:

Prithivi (Conjeevaram), *Appu* (Tiruvanaikkaval), *Teyu* (Tiruvannamalai), *Vayu* (Kalahasti), *Akasa* (Chidambaram), are a few of his scholarly compositions. He has also composed tana varnas, ragamalikas and lakshana gitas in apurva ragas.

At the invitation of some music-lovers of Madura, his two brothers, Chinnaswamy Dikshitar and Balaswamy Dikshitar, went over there. They gave many recitals of their brother's compositions and won appreciation from every quarter. After some time, the elder of the two brothers died and the surviving brother Balaswamy Dikshitar, in great sorrow left Madura and went on a pilgrimage to Setu. Afterwards he came to Ettiyapuram where the Rajah received him hospitably and patronised him.

Muttuswamy Dikshitar coming to know of his brother's demise travelled southwards in search of his surviving brother. Eventually he also came to Ettiyapuram where he was delighted to hear that arrangements were being made for the marriage of his last brother. The joy of the brothers knew no bounds when they met each other after a long period of separation. The Rajah too felt honoured at meeting the great composer. After the marriage, Muttuswamy Dikshitar returned to Tiruvarur. Sometime later he

went back to Ettiyapuram to attend the marriage of the Rajah's eldest son. After three months, he passed away there, on the Tula Krishna Chaturdasi Day, in the year 1835.

Prominent amongst his disciples are :—

Tirukkadayur Bharati
Avadayarkovil Vina Venkataramayya
Tevur Subrahmanyayya
Kornad Ramaswamy
Bilvavanam
Aiyasami
Suddha mridangam Tambiyappa
Vadivel, Ponnayya and Chinnayya (brothers)
Tiruvalur Kamalam and Ammani.

Dikshitar is said to have composed about 300 pieces. He has written kritis of varying grades of difficulty—from kritis useful for novices down to kritis which even well trained experts might hesitate to sing. With the exception of one manipravalam piece, all his other pieces are in sanskrit. His style is grand, majestic and learned and is the offspring of intellectual loftiness. His pieces are long and have deservedly become classics. They have to be studied and heard over and over again before their merits can be fully appreciated. He still speaks and appeals only to the few, but those few are really men of musical scholarship and competent judges of high class music. In the form

he adopted for his kritis, he has neither proto-type nor imitator. His kritis are in slow speed and are replete with raga bhava from start to finish. One characteristic feature of his kritis is that the music of one part does not repeat itself in another part *i.e.*, the *dhatu* rarely repeats itself in his kritis.

Ramaswamy Dikshitar (1735-1817) the father of Muttuswamy Dikshitar and the creator of the *Hamsadhvani* Raga, belonged to the Kasyapa Gotra, Apastamba Sutra. His father was Venkateswara Dikshitar and his mother Bhagirati Amma. In his seventh year, he left Conjeevaram and went to Govindapuram, a village near Tiruvadamarudur hallowed to the sacred name of Bodendra Sadguru Swamy. There he received his education in Sanskrit and Telugu. After the demise of his parents, he went to Tanjore and studied music under Virabhadrayya, for two years. He then went to Madhyarjunam for his higher musical studies. There he came into contact with Venkata Vaidyanatha Dikshitar, a collateral descendant of the great Venkatamakhi and a nitya agnihotri. He learnt vina under him and mastered the theory of music as expounded in the *Chaturdandi Prakasika*. He afterwards went to Tanjore. The Maharajah of Tanjore recognised his musical talents and bestowed on him several honours.

Dikshitar then went to Tiruvarur and settled down there. It was here that his son Muttuswamy Dikshitar was born. Two more sons, Chinnaswamy and Balaswamy and a daughter Balambal were born to him.

Manali Muttukrishna Mudaliar, a great patron of music happened to come to Tiruvarur at that time on pilgrimage. He was much impressed with the greatness of Ramaswamy Dikshitar and requested him to come and stay with his family at Manali. Dikshitar responded to the invitation. He stayed at Manali as the honoured guest of the Mudaliar for several years. Muttukrishna Mudaliar's son, Venkatakrishna (Chinnayya) Mudaliar honoured Ramaswamy Dikshitar with ***kanakabhishekam*** in appreciation of his masterpiece composition: the *108 Raga Tala Malika* beginning with the words: '*Natakadi Vidyala*'.

Dikshitar was religious-minded and on every Ekadasi Day he used to sing all the 24 Ashtapadis of Jayadeva.

In the year 1817, feeling that his end was drawing near, he left Manali with his family and returned to Tiruvarur. On the Mahasivaratri night of the Dhatu samvatsara, he passed away.

He has composed many ragamalikas, chowka varnas, tana varnas and kirtanas with the signature '*Venkata Krishna*.' He gave life, flesh, blood and swarupa to his newly created raga, Hamsadhvani, by writing a prabandha in it, illustrating the sancharas of the raga.

Chinnaswamy Dikshitar the younger brother of Muttuswamy Dikshitar, was a great scholar in Sanskrit and Telugu and a gifted singer and vainika. He was the recipient of several honours at the courts of Manali Chinnayya Mudaliar and several other nobles and chieftains. An interesting story is told of him. One night at Tiruvarur as he was performing an alapana of the *Nagavarali* raga, before a large audience of pundits and cultured men, a big cobra appeared before him and spreading out its hood, began to dance. The audience was thrown into a state of flutter at the sight of the venomous creature, but they were requested to remain calm. The snake rose up to its maximum height and danced with great vigour. When it got exhausted, it fell prostrate on the ground. After some time the music ceased and the snake withdrew to its place of abode quietly. Subbarama Dikshitar, who heard of this incident from Muttuswamy Dikshitar's disciples (who were eyewitnesses to this), records the same in his *Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini*.

Chinnaswamy Dikshitar went to Madura along with his younger brother and there gave many recitals of his brother's (Muttuswamy Dikshitar's) scholarly compositions. He passed away in Madura, in his 45th year. His kirtana in Todi raga in praise of Narada '*Ganalola Karunalavala*' is a well-known composition.

Balaswamy Dikshitar (1786-1858) the youngest brother of Muttuswamy Dikshitar was born in 1786 in the Parabhava year, Mithuna Ravi and Asvini nakshatra. He attained great scholarship in Telugu and music and was a versatile genius. He gained remarkable proficiency in playing the Vina, Swarabath, Violin, Sitar and Mridangam. Manali Chinnayya Mudaliar placed him under the tutelage of a European Violinist for three years during which period he made remarkable progress in the technique of violin playing. Balaswamy was also honoured in several samasthanams. After the demise of his elder brother at Madura, he went on a pilgrimage to Setu and then came to Ettiyapuram. The Raja of Ettiyapuram heard him play the violin and appreciated his talents. He made him his Asthana Vidwan and built for him a house and provided him with all facilities. Balaswamy Dikshitar passed away in the year 1858 in the Pingala year,

Kumbha Ravi, Sukla Tritiya. He is the author of several musical compositions.

Vina Kuppayyar, the most distinguished of Tyagaraja's disciples was born in Tiruvottiyur, a sacred place six miles to the north of Madras. He was also called Pata Kuppayyar, Narayanagaula Kuppayyar (on account of his extraordinary originality in handling this raga) and Tiruvottiyur Kuppayyar. He was a Tamil Brahmin of the Vadama sect and was a Sama Vedi. He came of the Bharadwaja Gotra. His father was Sambamurti Sastri, a great musician and Vainika. Of him it was said: సాంబడు వాయించవల, సాంబడు వినవల—***Sambadu Vayinchavala, Sambadu vinavala*** ***i.e.***, Sambadu (Sambamurti Sastri) should play (the Vina) and Sambadu (God Siva) should listen to that music. It was said that musicians who listened to Vina Kuppayyar's performances profited greatly by them—such an original and creative artist was he. He was also a violinist and earned the title of "*Gana Chakravarti*" for his proficiency in the different systems of music. He has composed many varnas, kritis and tillanas. He had a large number of disciples, prominent amongst whom may be mentioned Kottavasal Venkataramayyar (the author of many varnas), Sitaramayya (a pallavi vidwan), and Fiddle Ponnuswamy (the author of many varnas).

Vina Kuppayyar had three sons :—Krishnaswamy, Ramaswamy and Tyagayyar all of whom became great musicians. But the last named became a great composer as well. This Tyagayyar has published his *own* compositions in the book '*Sankirtana Ratnavali*.' He has rendered signal service to the music world by publishing his father's kritis and varnas in his other work '*Pallavi Swara Kalpa Valli*'.

Vina Kuppayyar was a great bhakta and carried on the worship of his family idol "*Sri Radha Rukmini sameda Sri Venugopala Swamy*" with great devotion and fervour. It was because of his devotion to his family deity that he signed his pieces as "*Gopala dasa*". He served under the great Tyagaraja for a long period and learnt the art of musical composition from him in a manner which it was not the privilege of any other of his (Tyagaraja's) disciples.

For the fault of having once played his master's sacred vina, when the latter was away, he incurred his wrath but was afterwards pardoned.

At his invitation, the great composer of Tiruvayar visited Tiruvottiyur, where in praise of Tripurasundari Ambal he composed the five

kritis:—*Kanna talli, Sundari ninnu varnimpa, Sundari nannindarilo, Darini telusukonti, Sundari ni divya roopamuna.* Both of them next visited Kovoor, halting at Madras on the way. Kuppayyar was the samasthana vidwan of Kovoor at that time and enjoyed the patronage of Sundaresa Mudaliar. It was at Kovoor temple that Tyagaraja composed the five kritis: *Sambho Mahadeva, Evasudha ni vanti, Nammi vachina, Kori sevimpa rare* and *Sundareswaruni.* At the request of several people, Tyagaraja sang the *Devagandhari raga and expounded it for several hours to the delight of his hearers.

During the latter part of his life Vina Kuppayyar came and settled down in Madras. His house in Ramaswamy Street, Muthialpet, became a musical centre and many musicians and composers derived inspiration by coming into contact with him.

Vina Kuppayyar lived to a ripe old age and was mainly responsible for making Madras a seat of musical culture. Madras has every reason to be proud of him.

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*It is said that Tyagaraja, during his sojourn in Madras stayed at No. 4 Bunder Street, as the honoured guest of Kovoor Sundaresa Mudaliar. The concert wherein he sang the Devagandhari raga also took place there.

Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbayyar, another of Tyagaraja's illustrious disciples was a Muriginadu Telugu Brahmin and was a relative of the great composer. He was an expert violinist. Prominent musicians like Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer, Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer, Sarabha Sastrigal, Fiddle Venkoba Rao, Panchapakesayya (grandson of Tyagaraja) and Sivaramayyar all studied under him. He has composed many kritis in praise of "Venkatesa". Some of the kritis ascribed to Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer are in reality those of Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbayyar's. The dubiousauthorship arose from the fact that both of them signed their pieces with the same signature "*Venkatesa*". In the kriti *Swamiki sariyeva rana vachu* in the Devagandhari raga, he pays his homage to the guru.

Walajabad Venkataramana Bhagavatar was a Saurashtra Brahmin and one of the devoted disciples of Tyagaraja. His *Dhyana slokas* and *Mangalashtakam* in praise of his guru are delightful compositions. On the occasion of the marriage of his master's daughter, Sitalakshmi, he took with him as a wedding present, a beautiful picture of Kodandarama Swamy painted by himself. Tyagaraja on seeing the picture was so enraptured that he burst forth into the famous

song in Mohana raga " *Nannu palimpa nadachi vachitivo* ". The charana of this kriti is in fact a description of this picture. This picture is even now preserved in Tyagaraja's house in Tiruvayar. Venkataramana Bhagavatar had a son, Krishna Bhagavatar who was a great musician and who also had the privilege of learning kritis from Tyagaraja himself. Venkataramana Bhagavatar passed away on the Suddha Saptami day of the Margasira month of the Bhava year (sixty years ago). Mysore Sadasiva Rao was a disciple of Venkataramana Bhagavatar.

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Amongst writers of Tamil operas, the following three names figure prominently :—Arunachala Kavirayar, Gopalakrishna Bharati and Kavikunjara Bharati.

Arunachala Kavirayar (1711-1778) was born in Tillaiyadi (தில்லையாடி) a village in Tanjore District. His father was Nallathambia Pillay and his mother Valliyammai. Under the able tutelage of Ambalavana Kavirayar of the Dharmapuram Mutt, he made great progress in the study of Tamil, Telugu and Sanskrit. The Saiva and Vaishnava sacred literature had a great attraction for him. He married

when he was thirty and started life as a merchant. At the request of several of his friends, he began to write the story of the great epic Ramayana in the kirtana form. The work was completed in the year 1771. '*Ramanatakam*' by which name the work came to be called is the first modern opera in the Tamil language. In setting the several songs to music his two disciples: Kodandaramayyar and Venkataramayyar (both from Chattanathapuram) assisted him. This work soon became popular. The language employed being simple and easily understandable, it appealed to the masses and even now one can hear the *Ramanataka* kirtanas sung in every house in Southern India. The ragas chosen for the pieces are quite appropriate and fit in with the ideas and the rasas of the songs. We meet with several rare Tamil proverbs in his songs. The work was given publicity in the Srirangam temple, where the author was suitably honoured. Kavirayar was honoured with kanakabhishekam by Manali Muttukrishna Mudaliar. Amongst other patrons that honoured him were Tepperumal Chettiar, Tulajaji Maharajah of Tanjore, Pondicherry Anandaranga Pillay and Udayarpalayam Yuvaranga Udayar. Besides the *Ramanatakam*, he has written several stray kirtanas. He is also the author of the following works:—

Sirgazhi Sthala Puranam (சீர்காழி ஸ்தல புராணம்)
Sirgazhi Kovai (சீர்காழிக் கோவை)
Hanumar Pillai Tamizh (ஹனுமார் பிள்ளைத் தமிழ்)
Asomukhi Natakam (அசோமுகி நாடகம்)

The *Ramanatakam* served as a beaconlight to subsequent writers of Tamil operas. Ananta Bharati followed him up and wrote the Uttara Khanda of the Ramayana in kirtanas, adopting the same model.

Gopala Krishna Bharati (1811-1881) was born at Narimanam (நரிமணம்) a village near Tiruvarur in Tanjore District. His father Ramaswamy Bharati and grand-father Kodandarama Iyer were good vainikas. He was a Tamil Brahmin of the Vadama sect. He attained proficiency in several languages and studied the Vedas under Govinda Yati. He practised Yoga. He attained great proficiency in music. Losing his parents early in life, he had a drifting career. When he was 24, he came to Anatandavapuram and there enjoyed the patronage of a rich mirasdar, Annuvayyar. He lived the life of a brahmachari and with the money earned through his kalakshepam performances, he not only supported himself, but also managed to save something. Later in his life, with the aggregated savings he instituted certain charities in Chidambaram and Mayavaram, which are admi-

nistered to this day. Bharati was a great yogi and gnani and entirely unsectarian in his religion. He wrote many kirtanas in Tamil with the signature *Gopala Krishna.*

The opera however had a great attraction for him and he began to devote his whole time to the writing of Tamil operas. His greatest work is "*Nandanar Charitram*" which is staged wherever the Tamil language is spoken. His genius as a playwright is fully revealed in this work. From the small story of Nandanar given by Sekkizhar (சேக்கிழார்) in his ***Peria Puranam*** (பெரிய புராணம்), running to about 37 verses, Bharati has developed a beautiful drama, enriching it by the introduction of fictitious personages like the orthodox, obdurate, tyrannical landlord, the companions of Nandanar etc. The music of the several pieces is also of very great merit. He has popularised several of the forgotten musical forms like the *Irusollalankaram* (இரு சொல்லலங்காரம்), *Nondi-chindu* (நொண்டிச்சிந்து) etc., in his operatic works.

His '*Nandanar Charitram*' soon became famous and he was invited to go to several places to give recitals of this work. He went to Negapatam at the invitation of Kandappa Chettiar, a rich merchant and performed his "*Nandanar Charitram*".

Seesiah, a French official of Karaikal, who heard of the greatness of Bharati through his Indian clerks, invited him to come to Karaikal and repeat his discourse there. Bharati made such an impression on the French officer that the latter forthwith undertook the publication of his work. This is the first edition of "*Nandanar Charitram*," but unfortunately not a single copy of this edition is now available.

At Mayavaram, Bharati met Mr. Vedanayakam Pillai (1824-1889), the District Munsiff and the author of "*Pratapa Mudaliar Charitram*" and "*Sarva samaya samarasa Kirtanas*." Mr. Pillai became one of Bharati's devoted disciples and he adopted his master's style in his kirtanas. Bharati wrote three more operas:—*Iyarpagai Nayanar Charitram* (இயற்பகை நாயனர் சரித்திரம்), *Tirunilakanta Nayanar Charitram* (திருநீலகண்ட நாயனர் சரித்திரம்) and *Karaikal Ammayar Charitram* (காரைக்கால் அம்மையார் சரித்திரம்). He also wrote the *Gnana Chindu* (ஞானச் சிந்து) and *Gnana Kummi* (ஞானக் கும்மி). His stray kirtanas (விடுதி கீர்த்தனைகள்) alone are said to be more than a thousand in number. Tanjore Krishna Bhagavathar (1847-1903) the father of modern Tamil kalakshepam did much to popularise the "*Nandanar Charitram*."

Gopalakrishna Bharati passed away on the Mahasivaratri night as a great yogi in the year 1881.

Kavikunjara Bharati (1810-1896) was born in Perungarai (பெருங்கரை), a village in the Ramnad District. His father was Subrahmanya Bharati. He received a sound education in Tamil, Sanskrit and music and began to write poetry while still in his teens. He was very pious and utilised his poetic and musical gifts to sing the glories of God. Madura Kavi Bharati (மதுரகவி பாரதி) and he were good friends. His poems became very popular and the Raja of Sivaganga (Gauri Vallabha Raja) sent for him and honoured him. At the Raja's request he stayed in the samasthanam as one of the Asthana vidwans. Hearing of the greatness of Bharati, the Rajah of Ramnad (Muttu Ramalinga Setupati) requested him to come to his place. Struck by his extraordinary poetic and musical talents he bestowed on him high honours and made him one of his samasthana vidwans. The Rajah's brother Ponnuswamy Thevar, a great Tamil scholar also honoured Kavikunjara Bharati, and requested him to write in the operatic form the story of Kanda, on the model of Arunachala Kavirayar's "*Rama Natakam*" Bharati began the work in 1865 and finished the same in five years. The "*Skanda Purana Kirta-*

nas" is his greatest contribution to South Indian Music. His contemporaries held him in high esteem. He passed away in 1896 (in the Kartigai month of the Hevilambi year) in his 86th year.

Pachimiriam Adiyappayya was the Asthana vidwan in Tanjore during the reigns of Pratapa Simha Maharajah (1741-1764) and Tulajaji Maharajah (1765-1787). He will long be remembered as the celebrated composer of the famous Ata tala varna "*Viriboni*" in Bhairavi raga. He has besides composed a number of kirtanas in rakti ragas and desiya ragas with the signature "*Sri Venkataramana*". He is also credited with having systematised the methods of singing raga alapana, madhyamakala and pallavi. Pallavi Gopalayyar and his brother Sanjeevayyar were his disciples. His son was *Vina Krishnayya*, who wrote the famous '*Sapta Talesvaram*'. Vina Krishnayya's son was Vina Subbukutti Ayya, who became an expert vina player early in his life. He was reputed to possess accurate tala gnanam and it was acknowledged that none could approach him in this respect.

Anayya was a great musician and a scholar in Sanskrit, Tamil and Telugu. He was the samasthana vidwan in the time of Sarabhoji Maha-

rajah of Tanjore. He has composed a number of kritis in Tamil and Telugu with the signature '*Umadasa*'. He had a brother named Aiya Iyer. One of his distinguished disciples was Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer.

Pallavi Gopalayyar, an expert in pallavi singing was a pupil of Pachimiriam Adiyappayya. He was a samasthana vidwan in Tanjore during the reigns of Amara Singh Maharajah (1788-1799) and Sarabhoji Maharajah (1800-1832). He has composed a number of kirtanas and varnas with the signature "*Venkata*" His compositions are some of the best and most scholarly ones we have in South Indian music. In his kritis, he has developed a new style. His two Ata tala varnas—*Kanakangi* in Todi raga and *Vanajakshi* in Kalyani raga—are splendid compositions and are practised by all students of instrumental music as they serve to develop the finger technique well.

Ghanam Krishnayyar, the eminent singer of madhyamakala and the greatest composer of Tamil padas, was a Tamil Brahmin and belonged to the Ashtasahasram sect. He was born at Tirukunnam (திருக்குன்னம்) a village near Ariyalur in Trichy District. His father was Ramaswamy Iyer, a Tanjore Palace Vidwan. He met Bobbili Kesavayya, when the latter came to the

south and learnt from him new styles of musical exposition. Krishnayyar lived under the patronage of the Tanjore Maharajah, but unable to bear the jealous attitude of his fellow vidwans, he bade farewell to Tanjore and went to Udayarpalayam. The zamindar of that place, Yuvaranga Bhupati, welcomed and honoured him. He wrote many padas in praise of the zamindar. His compositions are replete with raga bhava and will be remembered by posterity for ever. Krishnayyar's music was praised by many eminent musicians of his time including Tyagaraja.

Gurumurti Sastri, known as *Veyi gita* (author of 1000 gitas) *Paidala* (his house name) *Gurumurti Sastri* was a Telugu Brahmin and belonged to the Murikinadu sect. He lived in Madras and was a great scholar and an expert musician. He wrote many gitas, prabandhas and kirtanas and signed them with his own name.

Venkataramayya, known to the musical world as '*Inupa sanigelu Venkataramayya* ఇనుప సనిగెలు వెంకట్రామయ్య (இரும்புக்கடலை வெங்கடராமய்யர்)' on account of the terse nature of his compositions, is the author of the well known Todi kirtana "*Satamani*" in praise of Sri Bodendra Sadguru Swamy. He has also composed several other devotional kirtanas with the signature "*Gopalakrishna*."

Swati Tirunal, who ruled over Travancore from 1829 to 1847, was born on the 16th April 1813. He occupies an honoured place amongst the royal composers of South India. He was a great poet, scholar and linguist and has composed songs in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Manipravalam (Malayalam-Sanskrit), Hindusthani and Mahratti. He was a versatile genius and a great patron of music. Illustrious musicians like Paramesvara Bhagavatar, Govinda Marar and Vadivel adorned his samasthanam. He composed many kirtanas, padas, varnas, tillanas and raga malikas, with the signature '*Padmanabha*.' His compositions number more than three hundred. His Highness was a master in the art of introducing the technical beauty known as '*svarakshara*' in his compositions.

Govinda Marar, referred to as *Shatkala* Govinda Marar on account of his extraordinary capacity to manipulate with ease pallavis in six degrees of speed, was one of the greatest musicians of Travancore. His tambura had seven strings, three of which were tuned to the shadja, three to the mandra panchama and the other to the mandra shadja. He had his tambura bedecked with a flag like Bobbili Kesavayya. In the course of his pilgrimage to Benares, he came to Tiruvayar and met the great composer Tyagaraja, who appreciated his talents.

Paramesvara Bhagavatar, (1815-1892) was a Brahmin of Palghat and belonged to the Brahacharanam sect. He came to Trivandrum when he was eighteen years of age and was soon made the chief samasthana vidwan. He was a gifted singer, and also composed some pieces. One of his disciples was the talented singer, Coimbatore Raghava Iyer.

Meruswamy (Ananta Padmanabha Goswamy) a Mahratta Brahmin of Tanjore, was a Harikatha performer in the service of H.H. the Swati Tirunal Maharajah. He possessed a very sweet voice and was for this reason called Kokila-Kanta (cuckoo-voiced) Meruswamy.

Kshirabdi Sastri, was a native of Tinnevelly and composed songs on vedantic themes.

Madhyarjunam Doraiswamy Iyer, the distinguished pallavi singer and the father of Govinda sivan and Sabhapati, (pupils of Tyagaraja), Tarangambadi Panchanada Sastri, a pupil of Syama Sastri and the author of many kritis in praise of Devi, Todi Sitaramayya, Sonti Venkatasubbayya, Vina Perumalayya, Vaikunta Sastri, Kuppuswamayya, Chowkam Sinayya, Challagali Krishnayyar, Sankarabharana Narasayya and Violinist Ambayiram were some of the other prominent contemporaries of Syama Sastri.

APPENDIX.

FAMOUS FIGURES IN INDIAN MUSICAL HISTORY

Note.—The beginnings of Indian music go back to the dim pre-historic times. References to it are found in the Vedic literature *i. e.*, the Brahmanas, Upanishads, and Prati Shakyas. The Ramayana makes references to music in the courts of the Solar Dynasty of the North, the Dravidian kings of the South and of Ravana. There are also many references to music in the Mahabharata. Arjuna in the disguise of Brahannala was engaged by the King of Virata, as a music teacher to his princesses among whom was Uttara, the daughter of the King. Side by side with the Aryan system of music, the ancient Dravidians also developed their own system.

Indian music has had a continuous development from early times. Whenever a conflict arose between the *lakshana* (sastra) and *lakshya* (current practice) the former was altered or was interpreted in such a manner as to conform to the latter. This liberal attitude of music scholars century after century has been responsible for the progressive growth and development of Indian Music.

There was a time (roughly 1,200 years ago) when a single system of music prevailed throughout the length

and breadth of India with local variations. The bifurcation into the Hindusthan and Karnatic systems came later. Both systems, though built on a common foundation, began to develop independently. Many scholars are of opinion that the Hindusthani music is based on *Hanuman mata* and Karnatic music on *Narada mata*.

The history of Indian music might be divided into three main periods:—*Ancient*, *Medieval* and *Modern*. The music of each of these periods possesses certain distinctive characteristics. Ancient music was classified into *Margi* and *Desi*. Desi was the current music and Margi music was said to have gone to Indraloka long ago. What exactly Margi music was must remain a matter for speculation until sufficient researches are carried on and satisfactory conclusions arrived at. In the music of the Ancient period, the *Grama-Murchana-Jati* system of classification prevailed. During this period, music was regarded as subordinate to Nritta and Natya.

The birth of the Medieval period is marked by an important musical event—the coming into existence of the North Indian system of music. In the works of this period music is treated as an independent science by itself, irrespective of its use in Nritta or Natya. The conception of the modern raga also had its birth during this period. The idea of absolute music dominates the compositions of the Modern period.

Roughly speaking, the Ancient period might be taken to extend from early times down to the seventh century A. D. *i. e.* till Narada's "*Sangita Makaranda*." The Medieval period might be taken to extend from the seventh century down to the period of Venkatamakhi's "*Chaturdandi Prakasika*" (1660). The Modern period commences from his time.

* * *

Notes on prominent scholars, composers and musicians (excluding those already dealt with) are given here. The names have been arranged in chronological order as far as possible.

Bharata's *Natya Sastra* is the earliest work of acknowledged authority on Indian music. Not much is known about the author himself. He is believed to belong to the fifth or sixth century A.D. He lived before Kalidasa, for the poet speaks of him in his '*Vikramorvasiam*'. Natya Sastra is a treatise on ancient Hindu dramaturgy and deals with music only incidentally. The work has nothing to say about the ragas and raginis, but in the few chapters it devotes to music, is concerned with the srutis, gramas, murchanas and jatis of the Ancient period. Bharata's treatise consists of 37 Chapters. The contents relate to the rules of delivery, the musical accompaniments, gestures including poses, production of bhava and rasa in the minds of the audience, the stage toilet, the origin, development and greatness of theatrics, the forms of the stage, dance postures recommended to please the deities, the qualification and behaviour of the

actor and the actress on the stage, the stage dharma etc. The 28th Chapter which is the most important for musicians, gives the 22 srutis, the 2 gramas, the 7 notes of the suddha scale, the 14 suddha murchanas and pentatonic and hexatonic scales numbering 84.

There are as many as nine commentaries on this work, but that of Abhinavagupta is the most important.

Narada's *Sangita Makaranda*,, the next important work is believed to have been written about the seventh century A.D. The author is not the Sage Narada, for the Puranic Maharishi is referred to in the work by the author. This work is of great importance from the historical point of view in as much as it is the first book to make mention of the classification of ragas into *masculine* (purusha) ragas, *feminine* (stri) ragas and *neuter* (napumsaka) ragas, which later paved the way for the development of the *Raga-Ragini-Putra* system of classification, in North Indian music. We may also assume that it was about this time that Hindusthani music as a distinct sub-system of Indian music had its birth. Bharata does not say a word about this system of raga classification. The *Makaranda* also makes mention of other systems of raga classification, not mentioned by later writers:—

i. Sandhi prakasa ragas—ragas to be sung during sunrise and sunset.

ii. Ragas of Suryamsam and Chandramsam.

iii. Morning, noon and evening ragas.

iv. (1) Muktanga kampita ragas *i. e.* ragas which have shakes throughout—almost corresponding to the modern sarva svara gamaka varika raga.

(2) Ardha kampita ragas—ragas with a few gamaka svaras *i. e.* where only some of its notes are shaken.

(3) Kampa viheena ragas—ragas wherein notes are sung or played *pure*, without gamakas.

Matanga's *Brihaddesi* was written before the *Sangita Ratnakara*. The author seems to have been a specialist in the matter of wind instruments and treats of them in an elaborate manner. His work is highly instructive. The author also deals at length with the desi ragas.

Jayadeva the author of the *Gita Govinda* was born at Dindubilvam in Beerbhum, Bengal. He lived in the twelfth century and was a great Krishna Bhakta. His wife Padmavathi also was a great devotee of the Lord.

The *Gita Govindu*, a srungara maha kavya consists of 24 songs in all, in 12 sargas written in Sanskrit. The relationship between Radha and Krishna is the theme of the work. All the songs with a few exceptions consist of 8 stanzas each and hence the name *Ashtapadi*. The importance of the work consists in the fact

that it is the earliest Indian opera, though in a rudimentary form. There are the three personæ—*Nayaka, Nayaki* and *Sakhi*—and the songs are sung by one or other of these three. The non-inclusion by him of Sri Krishna in his list of Dasavatars makes us conclude that to him, Lord Sri Krishna was the *Parabrahma*. The *Ashtapadi hymns* belong to the realm of Sacred music and are sung throughout India, though not in the ragas and talas in which they were originally composed. The Ashtapadi hymns are the earliest musical compositions that we possess at the present day.

The work became so popular that many subsequent writers produced works on the same model, choosing parallel themes: *Ramashtapadi* of Ramakavi, *Sivashtapadi* of Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati and so on.

Sarngadeva's *Sangita Ratnakara* written sometime between 1210 and 1247 A.D. is one of the authoritative works on Indian music. The author was a great Sanskrit scholar and has also written a work called "*Adhyatma Viveka*" on the Vedanta theme. He had the title '*Nissanka*' (one who had no doubts) and belonged to the Varshagana Rishi gotra. His father was Soddala Deva, who was the son of Bhaskara, a Kashmiri pundit who went to the south and settled there. The work consists of seven chapters and treats more especially of music and dance than of dramaturgy. There are as many as seven commentaries on this work, but of these that of Kallinatha (1420) is the best known.

Some of the statements in the *Ratnakara* are at variance with the modern lakshana and lakshya. But the work is of great historical importance in as much as it gives us an insight into the music of his time and also into the music of the earlier period.

Lochana Kavi's *Raga Tarangini* is the first important work to deal with the music of Northern India during the Mahomedan period. The author enumerates the list of ragas and their raginis as current in his time. He also mentions twelve janaka melas and classifies his janya ragas under them. The method of obtaining ragas from the murchanas and jatis, had become obsolete in his time. The author uses only twelve svaras in describing his ragas and the names of his svaras and ragas are purely northern.

Pundarika Vittala, a great Sanskrit scholar, poet and musician, lived during Emperor Akbar's reign and is the author of the works:—*Shadraga Chandrodaya*, *Ragamala*, *Ragamanjari* and *Nartana Nirnaya*. Though a southerner, he was the Samasthana vidwan at Raja Burhankhan's Court and at his request undertook the arduous task of the systematization of the North Indian music of his time. He classifies the Hindusthani melodies into ragas, raginis and putras.

Haridas Swamy, the great Saint and musician, lived at Brindavan on the banks of the sacred Jumna. Many stories about the miraculous effects of his music

have been handed down. He lived during the time of Emperor Akbar and had eight disciples, amongst whom was the illustrious Tan Sen (known as Tannamisra before his conversion to Islam). The descendants of Tan Sen are now known as Seniyas.

Purandara Vittala, the author of the wellknown *Kanarese devotional songs—Devar namas*, lived in the sixteenth century. He was the son of a rich Madhva Brahmin merchant Varadappa by name. Though given the name Seenappa, he later came to be known as *Purandara Dasa* on account of his intense devotion to the Lord of Pandharpur. He had a devoted wife Saraswati Bai by name. Later in his life, he gave away all his property to charity and took upon himself the task of communicating the great philosophic truths enshrined in the Vedas, Upanishads and other sacred lore, in the form of simple kirtanas. The language used by him is so simple that it can be easily understood. He was the first to break away from the old tradition and write songs in the vernacular. He was a prolific composer and wrote several thousands of padas. About eight thousand of them are now extant in MSS. He was the first great guru to teach music in a systematic form and wrote for this purpose the graded exercises:—*Svaravali, Alankaras, Gitas, Tayas, Suladis, Prabandhas* etc. It is from his time that Mayamalavagaula raga came to be adopted as the starting scale for learning music. His songs clothed in sweet and soul-stirring music together with the lofty ideas and sentiments

contained in them have been the delight and admiration of musicians and pandits. Rightly has he been called the '*Karnataka Sangita Pita maha*'.

Talapakkam Chinnayya, the founder of the modern Bhajana *paddhati*, lived in Tirupati in the fifteenth century. He was a Telugu Brahmin and a great devotee of the Lord of the Seven Hills. It is said that Lord Sri Venkatesvara gave him darsan several times. Besides the bhajana kirtanas, he has also composed several kirtanas in praise of Sri Venkatesvara. Quite recently many copper plates containing his compositions have been unearthed in Tirupati.

Narayana Tirtha Yatindra, the author of *Sri Krishna Lila Tarangini* lived in the sixteenth century. He was an Andhra Brahmin and came from the Kistna District. Later in life he became a sanyasi. While in that asrama, he contracted a severe stomach-ache. Believing that he would get cured of this disease by going on a pilgrimage, he started towards the south. In the course of his sthala yatra, he came to Nadukkaveri, (நடுக்காவேரி) a village in Tanjore District. On the night of his arrival, while asleep in the temple, God appeared to him in his dream and said :—"Tomorrow morning after your prayers, you will see a *varaha* (pig) appear before you. Follow the animal and at the place where it disappears, you shall stay and give publicity to your '*Krishna Lila Tarangini*.' You will also be cured of your chronic ailment henceforwards."

Before dawn, the Yatindra woke up and finishing his bath in the river Cauvery, commenced his morning anushtanas. At the conclusion of his prayers, he was delighted to see a pig appear before him all of a sudden. He reverentially followed it. The animal ultimately went to the village, now known as *Varahur* and entering Sri Venkataramana Swamy Temple, disappeared there. The Yatindra thanked the Almighty for having cured him of his dire ailment and also for having guided him to Varahur. He resolved to spend the rest of his life there.

The inhabitants of the village coming to know of the arrival of Tirtha Narayanaswamy, welcomed him in a manner befitting his rank. It was after this incident that the village came to be known as *Varahapuri* or Varahur. Prior to this time, the village was called Bhupati Rajapuram (பூபதி ராஜபுரம்). The village, it is said, began to prosper after the arrival of the Maha Purusha. The saint gave publicity to his '*Krishna Lila Tarangini*' there and taught the songs to a number of disciples.

The Krishna Jayanti Festival is celebrated every year with great eclat in Varahur and during that festival one can hear all the Tarangas being faithfully sung by devotees. The Yatindra's samadhi is near the shrine. The portraits of Tirtha Narayanaswamy and Varahur Gopala Bhagavatar adorn the temple even now.

The Krishna Lila Tarangini, is one of the best operas in Sanskrit. It consists of twelve cantos, and songs in the several cantos are preceded by slokas and

short prose passages. The story of Krishna and Rukmini is the theme of the work. We meet with several interesting characters here. The songs consist of the divisions: pallavi, anupallavi and charana. In some songs, *jatis* also are seen interspersed with the sahityam. The Tarangas rank along with the Ashtapadis of Jayadeva in sacred music and are sung in every Bhajana Party in South India.

Bhadrachala Ramadas, the son of Gopanamatya lived in the sixteenth century. He was a Telugu Brahmin of the Niyogi sect and became a great scholar early in his life. During his official career as the Tahsildar of Bhadrachalam, he utilised the state revenues for the purpose of renovating the dilapidated temple of "Sri Rama" in that place. For this offence, he was sentenced to twelve years' imprisonment. It was during his prison life that he composed many of those soul-stirring devotional songs in praise of Sri Rama. Later, Sri Rama and Lakshmana appeared before the Nawab one night as the messengers of Ramadas and paid all the amount due to the state by him and procured his release.

His Telugu kirtanas are in sweet and melodious music and are sung throughout southern India. Tyagaraja pays his homage to the great Rama bhakta in his two kritis: '*Brundavana lola*' in Todi and '*Kshirasagara sayana*' in Devagandhari.

Ahobala's *Sangita Parijata*, (1650) is a popular and important work on North Indian music. The author was the son of Sri Krishna. The work was

translated into Persian by Dinanatha in the year 1724. Ahobala is the first writer to describe the svaras in terms of the lengths of the wire of the vina. His suddha scale is the modern Kaphi raga of Hindusthani music.

Raghunath Naik of Tanjore wrote the work *Sangita Sudha* with the help of his Prime Minister Govinda Dikshitar. The modern South Indian vina with the twelve fixed frets for the sthayi, dates from his time. The author discusses at length the conflicting views of the earlier writers and reconciles the lakshana to the lakshya of his time in an intelligent and useful manner. In fact, Karnatic music was systematised by him and we are at the present day following his system.

Govinda Dikshitar was a Karnataka Smartha Brahmin and belonged to the Vasishta gotra, Asvalayana Sutra. He was the Prime Minister during the reigns of Achutappa Naik and Raghunath Naik of Tanjore and did much to improve the finances of the state. Many temples were renovated and richly endowed by the State during his time. He was a contemporary of the great Appayya Dikshitar (1554-1626). His wife was Nagamamba. He had two sons: Yagna Narayana Dikshitar and Venkatamakhi. He was a great Sanskrit scholar and musician and was held in high esteem. He is the author of many lakshana gitas.

Ramamatya, *Somanatha* and *Venkatamakhi* constitute a group by themselves. They are respectively the

authors of the following standard works in Sanskrit on Karnatic music: *Svaramelakalanidhi, Raga Vibodha* and *Chaturdandi Prakasika.*

Ramamatya lived in the sixteenth century. He was a Telugu Brahmin and belonged to the Niyogi sect. His father was Timmamatya. The *Svaramela kalanidhi* was written at the request of Ramadeva Rajah of Vijayanagar in the year 1550. The following topics are dealt with in the book: svara, vina, mela and raga. He sticks to the *janaka-janya* system of raga classification. He enumerates 20 melas as also the several janya ragas derived from each of them. Ragas are also classified by him as *uttama, madhyama* and *adhama.* Mukhari is his suddha scale. He discards Sarngadeva's theory of twelve vikrta svaras and uses only seven. The modern four-stringed vina dates from his time.

Ramamatya had the title *Abhinava Bharatacharya.* He is also the author of several other musical and literary works.

Somanath was a great scholar and came from Andhra Desa. He wrote the *Raga Vibodha* in the year 1609. He followed Ramamatya's plan in his work. He mentions the 23 melas current in his time and also gives the derivatives (janya ragas) of those melas. He evolved a new scheme of 960 melas on the basis of 15 vikrta svaras. This scheme however is of mere academic interest to us at the present day. The treatment of the subject throughout is masterly and even the most

abstruse topics relating to musical theory are treated by him in a clear manner.

Besides the *Raga Vibodha*, he has also written a commentary on Mimamsa called *Somanathiam*.

Venkatamakhi, the author of the *Chaturdandi Prakasika* was the second son of Govinda Dikshitar. He first studied under his brother Yajna Narayana Dikshitar and later continued his musical studies under Tanappacharya—one of the renowned North Indian musicians of that time. In praise of his latter guru he has composed a gita in the Arabhi raga beginning with the words: "*Gandharva Janata*".

At the request of Vijaya Raghava Bhupa, the great scholar Venkatamakhi wrote the '*Chaturdandi Prakasika*' in 1660 dealing with the subjects of vina, sruti, svara mela, raga, alapa, taya, gita, prabandha and tala. He has enunciated in sloka form the lakshana of the several raganga, upanga and bhashanga ragas of his time and has illustrated them with his standard gitas. After the model of Jayadeva, he wrote 24 Ashtapadis in praise of Sri Tyagaraja Swamy, the presiding Deity of Tiruvarur. His raganga lakshana gitas help us to trace the history of several ragas. Some ragas enumerated by him under the upanga group have since become bhashanga. There are also ragas mentioned by him which have since become obsolete in South Indian music. Many interesting anecdotes about Venkatamakhi have been handed down.

Kshetragna, the immortal composer of Telugu padas, was a Telugu Brahmin and lived in the seventeenth century. He was born in Muvvapuri, a village in the Chandragiri Taluq of the Chittoor District. Early in life he attained great scholarship in sangita and sahitya. He was devoted to the presiding Deity 'Gopala' of his place and was blessed with His darsan.

He wrote according to his own statement about four thousand padas with the signature *Muvva Gopala.* His compositions are replete with raga bhava. The several aspects of the *Nayaka-Nayaki* lakshana are clearly illustrated in his padas. The ragas chosen for the several pieces fit in appropriately with the *rasas* of the songs. In the field of padam composition, he has no equal.

He travelled extensively and gave recitals of his compositions in several places. At the Madura, Tanjore, Golconda, and Vijayanagaram samasthanas, he was honoured. At the request of Vijaya Raghava Naik (the son of Raghunath Naik) he composed five padas—*the Vijaya Raghava Pancharatna*, with the *rajankitam.*

According to tradition, Jayadeva re-incarnated himself as Tirtha Narayanaswamy and still later as Kshetragna to sing on the same theme but in a new form.

Ghanam Sinayya, the author of several padas and kirtanas, lived in the seventeenth century. He was the son of Sesha Yajva and was a great scholar in Sanskrit and Telugu. He belonged to Atreya Gotra,

Apastampa Sutra. His pieces bear the signature '*Mannaru Ranga.*'

The other distinguished composers of Telugu padas are:—**Parimala Ranga, Sarangapani, Karvetnagar Govindasamayya, Muvvulur Sabhapati Iyer and Merattur Venkatarama Sastri.**

Pedda Dasari పెద్ద దాసరి, *பெத்த தாஸரி*, lived during the time of the Naik rulers of Tanjore. He was a great Narasimha bhakta and composed many padas. When he was asked by the Naik ruler to sing a padam in his praise, he refused to do so—"*நரஸிம்மனை ஸ்தோத்திரம் செய்த நாக்கால் நாயகனை ஸ்தோத்திரம் செய்ய மாட்டேன்.*" was his reply. The autocratic monarch sentenced him to be hanged for his impertinent reply. The devotee was least perturbed at this cruel sentence. He only desired to have darsan of his favourite Deity for once. He entered Sri Narasimha Swamy temple and became *merged* with the Deity. The guards waiting outside returned amazed and narrated the incident to their chief. The Naik Ruler wept bitterly and repented of his folly.

Margadarsi Seshayyangar, was a Sri Vaishnava Brahmin. He lived towards the close of the sixteenth and the beginnings of the seventeenth centuries. He was a Sanskrit scholar and wrote a number of kirtanas in Sanskrit with the signature '*Kosala*'.

Giriraja Kavi, the grand-father of Tyagaraja was an expert musician and a scholar in Sanskrit and Telugu.

He is the author of several devotional kirtanas in Telugu. He was honoured by Shahaji Maharajah (1684-1711) of Tanjore.

Virabhadrayya, a Telugu Brahmin was a remarkably gifted musician. He came to Tanjore during the time of Pratapa Simha Maharajah (1741-1765) and was honoured by him. He has left behind him a number of kirtanas, in many rakti and desiya ragas with the signature '*Pratapa Rama*'.

Tulaja Maharajah (1765-1787) was a great patron of music. He wrote the work *Sangita Saramritam* in 1770.

Meladhikara Lakshana is a valuable work on Karnatic music. There is a copy of it in the Tanjore Palace Library: MS No. 11604. The copy is incomplete and its author is not known. It is a work posterior to that of Venkatamakhi and the author of this work further expands his scheme of 72 melas. He sticks to the theory of 24 srutis and, making them svara sthanas, he developed a new and expanded scheme of 4,624 melakartas. The scheme is divided into 136 chakras, each chakra comprising 34 melakarta ragas. Just as we have the 36 suddha madhyama melakartas and 36 prati madhyama melakartas in the Venkatamakhi scheme, we have here 34 chakras (comprising 1,156 melakartas) for each of the four madhyama varieties. As in Venkatamakhi's scheme, the purvanga notes remain constant within each chakra; and the uttaranga svara combinations occur in the same order in every chakra. In this work the present accepted

names of the 72 melakarta ragas are bodily incorporated in their corresponding places. This incomplete work gives the names of over 1,000 melas. It is probable that the author got the clue to his 24 srutis from Venkatamakhi's lakshana gita in the Gundakriya raga. The names given by him for his 24 svara sthanas are easily comprehensible :—

Shadja	Panchama
Prati Suddha rishabha	Prati suddha dhaivata
Suddha rishabha	Suddha dhaivata
Prati Chatusruti rishabha (Prati suddha gandhara)	Prati Chatusruti dhaivata (Prati suddha nishada)
Chatusruti rishabha (Suddha gandhara)	Chatusruti dhaivata (suddha nishada)
Prati Shatsruti rishabha (Prati sadharana gandhara)	Prati shatsruti dhaivata (Prati Kaisiki nishada)
Shatsruti rishabha (Sadharana gandhara)	Shatsruti dhaivata (Kaisiki nishada)
Pratyantara rishabha (Pratyantara gandhara)	Prati Kakali dhaivata (Prati kakali nishada)
Antara gandhara	Kakali nishada
Chyuta madhyama gandhara	Chyuta shadja nishada
Suddha madhyama	
A-Prati madhyama	
Prati madhyama	
Chyuta madhyama panchama	

The Three Great Saints :—*Bodhendra Sadguru Swamy*, *Ayyaval* and *Sadasiva Brahmendra* were contemporaries and lived about two centuries ago. They have made substantial contributions to sacred music.

Sri Bodhendra Sadguru Swamy, was the son of Kesava Panduranga Yogi. His mother was Suguna. The Yati Sreshta was called Purushottaman in his purvasrama. The then Sankaracharya (58th in the line of Jagadgurus) of the Kamakoti Mutt, *Visvadikendra Sarasvati*, found in young Purushottaman, a fitting successor to him and began to bestow attention on his education. Bodhendra had a friend Gnanasagara by name. Later, the Sankaracharya went on a pilgrimage to Benares. A few days after, Purushottaman and his friend also went to Benares. At that place Purushottaman was ordained a sanyasi and was named *Bodhendra Sarasvati.* The Sankaracharya himself attended to his initiation and gave him the *Upadesam.* Taking leave of the Jagadguru, he came to the south. On his way he halted at Jagannath and stayed in the house of Lakshmikanta Kavi according to his guru's orders. The host was kind enough to present the distinguished guest with a copy of '*Nama Kaumudi*' the work of his father Lakshmidhara Kavi. Bodhendra returned to Conjeevaram and with the '*Nama Kaumudi*' as the basis, wrote the now famous '*Nama Siddhanta Granthas*'.

The Jagadguru returned to Kanchi from Benares. He read through his disciple's scholarly works and congratulated him. Both of them later went on a pilgrimage to Ramesvaram. On the way, the Sankaracharya attained *siddhi* and his disciple succeeded him and became the fifty-ninth Pitadhipati.

Bodhendra later met Ayyaval and both of them lived together for some time at Tiruvadamarudur. One

day, Bodhendra Sarasvati went for biksha to the neighbouring village, Govindapuram. In that place he attained *siddhi* in the year 1752 on the Pournami day of the Proshtapada month of the Prajotpatti year, according to the Tamil era. His Aradhana mahotsavam is celebrated with great *eclat* year after year in Govindapuram.

Bodhendra Sarasvati emphasised the importance of *Bhagavan nama Kirtana* in the Kaliyuga. The bhajana form of worship became popular after his time.

Sridhara Venkateswara Dikshitar, popularly known as **Ayyaval**, lived in Tiruvisainallur, near Kumbakonam. He was a great bhakta and wrote many stotras and devotional kirtanas. He was also instrumental in popularising the form of worship known as *Nama Sankirtana*.

His spiritual greatness was revealed to the world by a miracle that took place in his life time.

One new moon day, a Chandala came to his house and asked for food. The Dikshitar, without any hesitation asked his wife to give him meal. This act of his aroused the wrath of the orthodox people of the place. They raised a hue and cry and threatened the great bhakta with excommunication. Some of the elderly scholars suggested that the only way by which the Dikshitar could get purified was by a bath in the sacred Ganges.

Ayyaval, without muttering a word went to the back-yard of his house, sat beside the well and sang the

now famous '*Gangashtakam*'. The waters from the well immediately rose and overflowed and flooded his house as well as the streets of the village. Every one was astonished at this modern miracle and went and prostrated before Ayyaval for blessings.

Soon his fame spread and many came from far and near to have darsan of the great Saint. His house in Tiruvisainallur became a place of pilgrimage. The day on which this miracle happened came to be celebrated year after year. Even now, on that day every year thousands of pilgrims flock to his house to bathe in the sacred well.

Sadasiva Brahmendra Sarasvati was also born in Tiruvisainallur. He studied under the great scholar, Ramabhadra Dikshitar, the author of the Sanskrit drama "*Janaki Parinayam*". Ayyaval and *Maha Bhashyam* Gopalakrishna Sastrigal were also students of this great scholar. Sadasiva later continued his studies under the then Sankaracharya of Kamakoti pitam, *Sri Parama Sivendra Sarasvati.* He soon became a great yogi and wrote a number of devotional kirtanas in Sanskrit with the signature '*Paramahamsa*'. Besides, he wrote several other works like '*Siva Manasika Puja.* '*Atma Vidya Vilasam*' and '*Brahma Sutra Vritti*" He took to mauna vritam (மௌன விரதம்) and lived in the villages on the banks of the Amaravati and Cauvery in the Coimbatore District. People noticed him sitting in the state of *samadhi*, for days together. Many miracles were performed by him.

About the year 1738, the ruler of Pudukottai, Vijaya Raghunatha Raya Tondaiman met Sadasiva Brahmendra and received his blessings. The Pudukottai State, it is said, prospered after this memorable event.

During his last days Sadasiva Brahmendra came to Nerur. One day he told the local people that he was going to quit this life on the *Jeshta Suddha Dasami Day* of the Mithuna masa. On the day predicted, he shook off this mortal coil and got merged with the *Parabrahma.* His anniversary festival is celebrated with great eclat every year in Nerur.

Srinivasa, was a Tamil Brahmin. He served as a *Paricharaka* in the Minakshi Amman Temple at Madura. He received the blessings of the Goddess and composed several kirtanas. The musical construction of his pieces as well as the beauty of his sahityam elicited the admiration of several scholars. He wrote with the signature '*Vijaya Gopala*'. He lived during the time of Vijaya Ranga Chokkanatha Naik of Madura.

Kavi Matrubhutayya was a scholar in music and Telugu and lived in Trichinopoly. He was a devotee of Sri Sugandhi Kuntalamba and wrote a number of kirtanas and padas. His compositions bear the signature '*Trisiragiri.*' Pratapa Simha Maharaja of Tanjore gave him a sum 10,000 Rupees in appreciation of his musical talents.

Govindasamayya and **Koovanasamayya** were two brothers who lived towards the close of the seven

teenth century. They were Telugu Brahmins and belonged to Karvetnagar. They were the samasthana vidwans there. The Mohana, Navaroj, Kedaragaula and Natakuranji raga varnas associated with them are brilliant compositions. Govindasamayya is also the author of several beautiful Telugu padas.

Vijaya Gopala was a great bhakta and wrote several devotional kirtanas in Sanskrit and Telugu. He lived in the seventeenth century. His compositions bear the signature '*Vijaya Gopala*' and they are sung in bhajanas throughout southern India.

Kuppuswamy Ayyar was a contemporary of Syama Sastri and wrote many kirtanas and padas with the signature '*Varada Venkata*'

Ramananda Yatindra, the author of the well-known *Gauriraga Prabandha* lived in the eighteenth century.

* * *

The latter half of the nineteenth century produced many brilliant musicians and a few composers of outstanding merit.

Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer (1844-1893) was undoubtedly the dominant figure of this period. He was a scholar, musician, composer and katha performer all rolled into one. He had an extraordinarily gifted voice and people who heard his concerts have with one voice proclaimed that it was *gandharva ganam*. In his rapid rise to fame very early in life, he can be compared to the European composer, Mozart.

Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer was born in 1844 (in the Kuroti year) at Vaiyaicheri (வையைச்சேரி) in Tanjore District. He belonged to the Mazhanattu Brahacharanam (மழநாட்டுப் பிரஹசரணம்) sect, and his gotra was Kaundinya. His father was Duraiswamy Iyer. Vaidyanatha Iyer had two elder brothers, Sambamurti Iyer, and Ramaswamy Sivan. Appasamy Iyer was his younger brother. Of the four brothers, Ramaswamy Sivan and Vaidyanatha Iyer, made rapid progress in music. After learning the rudiments from their father, they continued their further musical studies under Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbier and Anayya. Vaidyanatha Iyer acquired the ability to sing raga and pallavi in his seventh year itself. From his ninth year he began to study the theory of music and became familiar with the literature on the subject. The range of his voice extended over three full octaves and he could sing in *shatkala* (six degrees of speed) without the least effort. He soon attracted the attention of many senior vidwans and patrons of music. He was invited to go to many places to give concerts. In all those places he electrified his audiences by his marvellous vocal gifts. The Rajahs of Pudukottai, Ramnad and Ettiyapuram invited him to their courts and after hearing his music bestowed on him high honours.

In the year 1856, he went to Kallidaikurichi in Tinnevelly District. Subramanya Desikar was the Pandarasannidhi of the local Tiruvavaduturai Mutt at that time. He was a great patron of arts and learning. He heard Vaidyanatha Iyer's music and was enraptured.

The Matadhipati decided to honour the young musician in a fitting manner.

The annual Gurupuja came and on the night after the Gurupuja, Desikar assembled all the vidwans. Peria Vaithi and Chinna Vaithi were amongst those present on that occasion. The several vidwans present sang one after the other. But Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer's brilliant music captivated everyone's heart. The vidwans present admired his wonderful skill. Subramanya Desikar, with the approval of Peria Vaidyanatha Iyer and the other senior vidwans, present there, bestowed on him the title '*Maha*' (great). This event took place in the year 1856 (Thai month of the Rakshasa year) in his twelfth year.

Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer's fame soon spread far and wide. He was invited to go to several distant places to give concerts. Maharajahs, Zamindars, Matadhipatis and scholars all alike took delight in honouring him.

He passed away on the 27th of Januray, 1893 (16th day of the Thai month of the Nandana year) in his forty-ninth year. He had an unparalleled musical career. He also composed some pieces. Posterity will ever remember him as the author of the monumental composition, *the Seventy-two Melakarta Ragamalika.*

Ramaswamy Sivan, his elder brother, was a great Tamil scholar, musician and composer. His Kambhoji varna (*Pankajakshi pai*) bristles with svaraksharam beauties. His *Peria Purana Kirtanas* and his other stray Tamil kirtanas are substantial contributions to

South Indian Music. His compositions bear the signature '*Guhadasa*'.

Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer, (1845-1902) is the greatest of the minor composers. He was an Ashtasahasram Brahmin. He studied music first under his uncle, Melattur Ganapati Sastri and later under Manambuchavadi Venkatasubbayyar. His voice was hard and by untiring practice, he trained it to a wonderful degree of perfection. He soon acquired fame as an expert in the artistic rendering of the kritis of Tyagaraja and other great composers. He was also a great pallavi singer. Once he composed a pallavi in the *Simhanandana tala*, (the longest of the 108 talas, with 128 aksharakalas for an avarta) and rendered it without the least effort. In his tala gnanam he had no equal. Panchanada Sastri, his elder brother used to sing along with him. Frequently his wife's brother, Seshayyar accompanied him with the violin.

He started his career when he was thirty. At thirty-two he married, and settled down in Tiruvayar. His fame soon spread and he was invited to go to many places to give concerts. He was honoured in the Courts of several Nobles, Rajahs and Zamindars. Latterly he stayed in Madras (Chennapatnam) and hence came to be called Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer. He is also referred to as Begada Subrahmanya Iyer, since he showed extraordinary originality in handling this raga.

His compositions number about a hundred and include tana varnas, kritis in Sanskrit, Tamil and

Telugu, javalis and tillanas. He adopted Tyagaraja's style most successfully in his kritis. The musical construction of his pieces is good and the sangatis are well arranged and succeed one another naturally. The raga bhava is patent on the face of every one of them. He signed his pieces with the signature '*Venkateswara*'. He trained a number of disciples, the most prominent amongst them being Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar.

Ramaswami Sivan in his pamphlet '*Maha Vaidyanatha Vijaya Sangraham*' made some unhappy references to Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer and this provoked a vehement reply from him. This was later followed by rejoinders from both sides : *Khandanam, Mandanam* etc., But Maha Vaidyanatha Iyer and Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer were themselves on very cordial terms, and sang together during the Saptasthanam festivals inTiruvayar.

Ramnad Srinivasa Iyengar, (Poochi Iyengar) was born in Ramnad and showed evidences of musical talents early in his life. The Rajah of Ramnad became interested in him and requested Patnam Subrahmanya Iyer to give him musical training. Very soon he proved a worthy disciple of a great master. He attained great proficiency in the theory and practice of music and also learnt the art of musical composition from his Guru. He became an expert in singing raga and pallavi.

He was a person of genial temperament and, unlike the generality of musicians, took a genuine interest in the uplift of the rising musicians. He was the samasthana vidwan of Ramnad and was also the recipient of honours in several other samasthanams.

He has composed several pieces consisting of tana varnas, kritis, javalis and tillanas. They are all brilliant compositions and will be remembered for long. The author's creative art and the richness of his musical conception are revealed in these pieces. He signed them with his own name. One of his illustrious disciples is Mr. Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar.

Pallavi Seshayyar was a Telugu Brahmin and belonged to the Murikinadu sect. His father was Subbayyar, a disciple of Tyagaraja. He was born at Neykkarappatti (நெய்க்காரப்பட்டி) in Salem. He was a great *lakshana lakshya* vidwan and a Rama bhakta. He was an expert pallavi singer and was held in high esteem by his contemporaries. He composed many varnas, kritis and tillanas. He once sang the Saveri raga for eight hours and broke all previous records. He signed his pieces with his own name.

Dharmapuri Subbarayar and **Pattabhi Ramayya** composed many javalis. The music of their pieces is uniformly lively, delightful and catchy. They signed their pieces with the respective signatures: *Dharmapurisa* and *Talavanesa.*

Dakshinamurti Iyer and **Devudu Iyer** were two cousin brothers who lived in Karur. They wrote many kritis with the signature '*Garbhapuri*'. Their kritis are popularly known as 'Garbhapuri kritis.'

Tiruvottiyur Tyagayyar, the son of Vina Kuppayyar was a great *lakshana lakshya* vidwan and lived in Madras. He is the author of several varnas and kritis and signed them with the signature '*Gopala*

dasa' after his father. He published his pieces in his work '*Sankirtana Ratnavali*' in Telugu. He passed away in 1917 September (Krishna Paksha Dvitiya).

Mysore Sadasiva Rao was a Maharashtra Brahmin and was a disciple of Walajabad Venkataramana Bhagavatar. He was a Samasthana Vidwan in Mysore and composed many varnas, kritis and tillanas. The svara sahityas adorning most of his kritis are splendid compositions. He signed his pieces with his own name.

Kunnakkudy Krishnayyar was the samasthana vidwan of Ramnad and lived to a ripe old age. He composed many varnas, kritis and tillanas. He also signed his compositions with his own name.

Subbaramayyar of Vaithiswarankovil, is the author of several beautiful Tamil padas. His richness of musical conception is revealed in every one of his padas. His compositions bear the signature '*Muttu Kumara*.'

Chinni Krishna Dasa composed many svarajatis and kirtanas in Telugu. He signed his pieces with his own name.

Chengalvaraya Sastri of Cheyyur and **Lingaraj Urs** of Mysore composed many kritis. They signed their pieces with their respective names.

Tachur Singaracharyulu was an Andhra Vaishnava Brahmin and was a disciple of Subbaraya Sastri. He was a great scholar in Sanskrit and Telugu and a *lakskana lakshya* vidwan. He was also a good violinist. He composed many kritis and javalis and signed them with his own name. He has rendered signal service to the music world by the publication of his

graded text-books on music. His brother Chinna Singaracharyulu was also a great musician.

Subbarama Dikshitar, the last great name in the Dikshitar line, was an expert musician and a scholar in Sanskrit and Telugu. He was the Samasthana vidwan of Ettiyapuram and has composed many varnas, kritis and ragamalikas. He has earned for himself undying fame by the publication of the monumental work '*Sangita Sampradaya Pradarsini.*'

Muthu Tandavar and **Marimutha Pillai** wrote several devotional kirtanas in praise of Sri Nataraja of Chidambaram.

Papavinasa Mudaliar lived in the eighteenth century. He composed many kirtanas. His compositions bear the signature '*Papavinasa*'.

Achuta Dasar, Muthukumara Pulavar, Kadigai Namasivaya Pulavar, Mookku Pulavar, Mambazha Kavirayar, Madhura kavi and Vedanayakam Pillai are other prominent Tamil composers.

Alluri Venkatadri Swamy, Ramachandra Yatindra Giriappa Garu, Tumu Narasimha Dasa, Ramanuja Dasa, Tulasi Dasa, Parankusa Dasa, Venkata Vittala Dasa, Madhusudana Paramahamsa, Mambalam Adi Narayana Dasa and Venkata Varada Dasa wrote many devotional kirtanas.

Among the prominent musicians of the latter half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century might be mentioned: Andanur Subbayyar, Bikshandarkovil Subbarayar, Sathanur Panju Iyer, Manathattai Vaidya-

natha Iyer, Peria Vaithi, Chinna Vaithi, Brahmanda Vaithi, Coimbatore Raghava Iyer, Khamas Madhava Rao, Tanjore Krishna Bhagavatar, Rattaipallavi Sivarama Iyer, Pallavi Talanayar Somu Iyer, Dasavadyam Krishnayyar, Namakkal Narasimha Iyengar, Balasarasvati Jagannatha Bhatgoswamy, Sarinda Naidu, Palni (Ghatam) Krishnayyar, Swarabat Krishnayyar, Gotuvadyam Srinivasa Rao, Sarabha Sastrigal, Anantarama Bhagavatar, Prathapa Ramaswamy Bhagavatar, Tiruvayar Subrahmanya Iyer (the author of *Sangita Kaumudi*), Jalatarangam Subbayyar, Konerirajapuram Vaidyanatha Iyer, Vina Seshanna, Bidaram Krishnappa, Tirukkodikaval Krishnayyar, Mridangam Narayanaswami Appa, Dolak Nannu Mea, Mamundia Pillay and Govindasami Pillay.

Tamil Sacred music.

The Devara Hymns of the three Saivite Saints, Tirugnana Sambanda Swamigal, Tirunavukkarasu Swamigal (Appar) and Sundaramurti Swamigal, the *Tiruvachagam* of Manicka Vachagar, the *Songs* of the Vaishnava Samayacharyas, the *Tiruppugazh* of Arunagirinathar, the *Songs* of the Siddhars, the *Poems* of Tayumanavar, and Ramalingaswamy form part of *Tamil Sacred Music*. The authors of the Devara hymns lived between the seventh and the ninth century A. D. Manickavachagar probably belongs to the tenth century though some maintain that he lived in the sixth century. Tayumanavar and Arunagirinathar lived in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries respectively. Ramalingaswamy lived in the nineteenth century. The Tiruppugazh hymns are of special interest to musicians inasmuch as the author employs in them innumerable varieties of time-measures.

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